

THE OZARK JOURNAL.

of

Friedrich Wilhelm Christian  
Gerstäcker

1841/1842

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION.

Friedrich Gerstäcker was born in Hamburg, Germany, on May 10, 1816. His parents were opera singers who moved very frequently depending on the demands of the opera. Friedrich's father died of tuberculosis when Friedrich was nine years old, His mother felt overwhelmed taking care of her children and performing opera, Friedrich was sent to her sister Molly.

Friedrich's uncle felt he should be a businessman and apprenticed him at age 19. Friedrich had other ideas. Greatly influenced by James Fenimore Cooper's writing while a youth Friedrich went to America in 1838.

Friedrich landed in New York and proceed to walk most of the way to Arkansas, where he spent the first three months of 1838 hunting on the Little Red River and working as a fireman on a steamboat on the Arkansas River. For the following fifteen months, he traveled back and forth between Texas, Ohio, and Louisiana before spending another nine months in Arkansas, from May 1839 to February 1840, in Poinsett, St Francis, and Independence counties. He traveled to Arkansas again for a two-week hunting trip on the Cache River and Bayou de View in August 1840, and then for an eighteen-month stay in 1841 and 1842, mainly along the Fourche La Fave River in Perry and Yell counties and along the Mulberry Creek in Madison County. In July 1842, he left Arkansas for Louisiana,

Friedrich Gerstäcker was a German author , English translation are few, they are however a excellent source of historic information. I have published this edition to help spread the knowledge of early Madison County history. Having personally spent a good deal of my youth on the back-roads and trails of

northern Franklin and southern Madison County, I recognize some of the landscape described in the book. The area is isolated even today. One can only imagine the remoteness of the area in the early 1840's

Friedrich states he is on the War Eagle and the Richland creeks while on several of the hunting expeditions. I believe he is speaking of the Lollars Creek branch of Richland Creek, although he may be speaking of the Ball Creek branch. From the description in the book I believe he spent time camped near the area where modern Ball Creek runs into Lollars Creek. Ball Creek is a good size stream at this point. If he had been farther down stream I believe the time line and description of the land would be different. Two streams run into Lollars Creek from the east. The only two of any size are Ball Creek and Drakes Creek and Shooting Creek on the west side.

The cave that is mentioned is located on War Eagle near Witter, Arkansas. Madison County author M. E. Oliver included a drawing in his book "Strange Scenes in The Ozarks" of the Apple Cave where the brave Konwell's and Gerstäcker killed the bear in the cave. Since M. E. Oliver owned an apple orchard near the Ball Creek and Lollar's Creek junction would maybe explain more than a passing interest in Friedrich Gerstäcker Madison County travels. Old legends often survive in ol'wives tales.

Another note is the Debating Society. This gives us a glimpse of Ozark entertainment. In older local newspapers from Saint Paul there is a mention of a Debating Society meeting in the Cove School House on War Eagle Creek. The debate location Gerstäcker mentions may have been in "Old Skully", as it was one of the older settlements in Madison County.

Interspersed through the narrative are interesting tidbits of information. Friedrich Gerstäcker makes interesting observations concerning towns and building. The treatment of the Indians on

the Trail of Tears is very blunt but honest assessment of their condition.

The last two chapters concern a lost Spanish treasure, a legend that has existed since the French occupied the area or perhaps before the French occupation. I have included it mainly due to the description of the area. Friedrich Gerstäcker had been to Hurricane River location and knew very well, the area land marks that he used in his story. This is the location where his fellow bruin hunter Erskine was killed, the area was surely burned into his memory.

Concerning the route Friedrich Gerstäcker took, The Hurricane River route that seem so remote today was far from the simplest route to the Saint Paul area. There existed a road from Clarksville to Saint Paul or "Old Skully" as it was known at the time. The road was known as the Clarksville Wagon Road. There was also a road that led from Ozark to Saint Paul that continued to Fayetteville that was the main road to Little Rock for Northwest Arkansas. Even at that early date these roads were well traveled and so provided little opportunity for hunting game. Friedrich Gerstäcker was, one might say, looking for a road less traveled, thus his path through the remote mountains of the Ozarks. His description of the White River being narrow enough to cross on a fallen tree means the crossing was more than likely at, or just east of, "Old Skully".

It is my hope the reader will enjoy reading of Friedrich Gerstäcker adventures in the "Wilds of Arkansas"

# Wild Sports

in the  
Far West

Friedrich Wilhelm Christian  
Gerstäcker

## CHAPTER II.

### HUNTING IN THE ARKANSAS.

Meantime it grew dusk, and Slowtrap returned with seven ducks, three of which had had their heads shot off. Meat was now plentiful. After Slowtrap had made himself comfortable--that is to say, had taken off his hat, laid aside his rifle and pouch, pulled off his wet shoes and stockings, taken unto himself a slice of cold turkey, with its appropriate maize bread and boiled pumpkin, seated himself with his feet to the fire, cut off a piece of his chair to make a toothpick, and begun complacently to pick his teeth, a sure sign that he felt comfortable, all which operations took about three quarters of an hour--he asked, "Well, what's the news?" As the answer was not encouraging, another long pause ensued. When it was quite dark, and a good fire was burning, his wife brought us some bread and milk, of which he partook largely, and then began to thaw, and speak of his exploits: he had fired eleven times, and his piece had missed fire twenty-seven times, a habit the old flint gun had; but he had nevertheless brought home seven ducks, and he had seen a fresh panther trail; the panther had probably seen him from a tree, and jumped down and escaped.

He took particular notice of my panther skin, and thought that there must be a number of them about, but that formerly there were more than twice as many in Kentucky. "Ah, at that time," said he, "a man might shoot five or six deer before breakfast, and once I had got up at daylight, and shot two noble bucks, and stalked a third for half a mile, when he got scent of me, and escaped. I was tired with my exertions, and had scarcely any sleep all night, for a rascally panther had been howling near me, and several times came so close to the fire that I could make out his form, though he never gave me time to put a ball into him with

certainty. So I threw myself under a tree, to rest a little, meaning then to continue my sport; but somehow my eyes closed unconsciously;--and I can't say how long I may have lain there, when, still half asleep, I heard a strong rustling among the dry leaves which surrounded me, and felt that they were being thrown over me, so that I was quite covered in a few minutes. Surprise at first, and then an instinct of danger, which I did not quite understand, kept me motionless, awaiting the result: before I had formed any resolution, I heard something moving stealthily away, and cautiously raising my head, saw a panther disappear in the thicket. My first act was to jump up and look to my priming, and as I saw nothing more of the beast, though I was sure that it would return, I resolved to oppose cunning to cunning. A piece of a broken bough lay near; I dragged it to the spot, and covered it carefully with dried leaves--then, slinging my rifle on my back, I mounted a neighboring oak to await in patience, but with a beating heart, the conclusion of the adventure, as the panther might return at any moment. I may have sat for rather more than half an hour, my eyes steadfastly fixed on the place where the panther had vanished, when the bough began to move, and the female panther (for a female it turned out to be), reappeared with two cubs, intending, no doubt, that I should serve as supper for the family. This time she had reckoned without her host. I remained silent and motionless in the tree, watching every movement and keeping the rifle in readiness. She crept stealthily to within fifteen paces of the spot where she had left me covered up with leaves, and crouched down with her green eyes glaring upon the log; the next instant she made a spring, struck the claws of both her fore feet into it, and buried her sharp fangs deep in the rotten wood. When she found herself deceived she remained for a moment or two in the same attitude, quite confounded. I did not leave her much time for consideration; my ball crashed through

her brain, and she fell dead on her supposed prey, without a moan. I killed the two young ones easily enough."

He had hardly finished the anecdote, when the dogs began to bark, and, by and by, we jumped up to see what was the matter. It was a neighbor, named Collmar, from the other side of the hill. I took the saddle off his horse, and laid it under one of the beds, tied up the horse to a young tree, shoved a roughly-hewn trough before him, which I filled with maize, and his eager munching proved how well he was satisfied with all the proceedings. Collmar had come over the hill to invite us to assist in erecting a new house. He had collected all the logs on the spot, and now, according to American custom, was calling on his neighbors to come and assist in raising them. Slowtrap was his nearest neighbor but one, and lived nine miles distant; the next dwelt eight miles further.

I promised to come at all events, but it was against Slowtrap's habit to promise any thing two days in advance. Besides, his wife and his youngest child were both unwell. We shortened the evening with stories and anecdotes. Collmar was off with the dawn to prepare for the following day. I took my rifle and lounged into the forest with Bears grease to look for a turkey. He drove a gang into the trees, at less than half a mile from the house; but the wood was so thick and overgrown, that before I could come up to see which trees they had perched in, they had so hidden among the branches that there was not a trace of them to be seen. I therefore whistled for my dog, and hid behind a tree to await the time when they would think themselves safe, and begin to call. I had not long to wait; ere long they began to cry, and about a hundred yards in front of me, a large cock raised himself on a branch, where he had nestled without my perceiving him. Without trying to get nearer, I took aim at once, and hit the turkey, which fell flapping from the tree; but the bushes were so thick

that I should have lost him, had not Bears grease dashed in with the greatest intrepidity, in spite of thorns and creepers. The turkey, whose fall had been broken by the wild vines, had no sooner touched the ground, than he made a quick run for a cane-brake, and disappeared, with Bears grease bounding and barking on his trail. On forcing my way through the canes, I witnessed an interesting struggle between the two. The dog was still young, and the turkey a fellow of twenty or twenty-two pounds; and Bears grease, knowing that he must not injure him, tried to hold him with his fore paws, whilst the turkey, which was only wounded in the left wing, constantly succeeded in escaping, and running a yard or two before the dog could pin him again. After watching them for some time, I put an end to the struggle by cutting off the turkey's head with my knife, and carried him home. I then saddled Slowtrap's old pony, and set off over the mountain to gain Collmar's house before night, leaving Bears grease behind me.

The hills and rivers south of the Arkansas almost all run, like that river, from west to east, and the hills have a peculiar formation. The middle row or back-bone ridge is the highest, and generally on either side are two or three lower ranges of hills, running parallel to the main range, and sloping more and more towards the plain. All the smaller rivers which run into the Arkansas from this side, have such hills between them. I rode slowly up and down these hills looking out for game. I had left my hunting-shirt behind, and a sharp north wind began to chill me a little; but I did not like covering myself with the blanket which lay across my saddle. Suddenly I saw a fox watching me from the side of a hill beyond a little brook. I raised myself slowly in the saddle, and fired; but my hand shook so with the cold that I missed him. After the report, when the smoke cleared away, the fox had disappeared; I jumped off and ran to the place where he

had been standing, to see if I could find traces of the ball--finding none I reloaded, and returned to the horse, which was quietly grazing. With my left foot in the stirrup, and in the act of throwing my right leg over the saddle, what was my astonishment to see the fox in the same place as before, looking as unconcerned as if nothing had happened! I had to turn my horse before I could take aim, and the fox turned at the same time. A loud whistle made him stop for a moment to see what it was; he was off again before I could fire, but not quick enough to escape my ball. The jump he gave showed he was hit; so, throwing myself off the horse, I hastened after him. When he heard the bushes rustling, he stood still to listen. This allowed me to approach him: the shot had broken his left hind leg; and, throwing away every thing that hindered me in running, I darted after him. Dragging his wounded leg, he limped along the side of the hill; but, finding that I gained on him, he turned towards the summit. I had run for a good half mile, and too much out of breath to breast the hill, I soon lost sight of him. Heated and tired, I returned to the horse, picking up my rifle, powder-horn, pouch, and cap, by the way, enveloped myself in my blanket, and mounted my patient steed.

I soon crossed the highest summit of the range, and running down by the side of a small stream southwards from the hills, in about an hour and a half arrived at the place where Collmar's house was to be built, and where some of those who had arrived before me were occupied in cutting the logs.

The ground was already prepared and planks cut; other neighbors arrived from time to time with their dogs and guns, and the clearing was filled with laughing, talkative groups.

The horses were hobbled near some reeds, with plenty of maize shaken down in a dry place. In the evening, we all assembled at Collmar's hut, or rather shed, formed of boards fastened together, supported by poles, and containing three roughly-hewn bedsteads,



a weaver's loom, and two spinning-wheels. It may have been about fifty feet long and twenty wide, with the floor as nature supplied it. Rifles and saddles lay about; three pairs of deer hams adorned one corner, and dried pumpkins hanging to poles, formed the sky to this paradise.

Immense blazing logs were heaped up in one blackened corner, and from time to time it was necessary to throw a pail of water over the fire to prevent the planks from burning; and then clouds of ashes threatened us with the fate of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

All sorts of cooking utensils were crowded round the fire--a turkey was stuck upon a stick to roast by the side of an opossum, dangling on a string from the roof. Notwithstanding my long abode among people who were passionately fond of this article of food, I could never bring myself to eat a thing with a rat's head and tail, and hand-like claws. The prospect of a good supper was a delight to my hungry stomach. Meantime, I was much diverted by a bargain about cows going on between two old backwoodsmen: but, before discussing this subject, it will be as well to say something of the other inmates of the shed. Collmar's wife, a stout, strong-built woman of about thirty-four, with two daughters of fourteen and ten, were all that belonged to the fair sex. They were busily employed about the fire with long-handled spoons, turning the meat in the frying-pans, and basting the turkey and opossum; five smaller figures, with a tin pot of milk in one hand and a lump of maize bread in the other, huddled near the fire, stared at the strangers with all their eyes. The hostess soon made room for the company by sending the children to bed. But to return to the bargainers about the cows. Instead of each praising his own cow, they found so much fault with them, that their own calves, if they had heard it, must have felt ashamed of them. After above an hour's discussion on the faults and failings of their horned property, they observed that they could not part

with them without giving something into the bargain, as even their hides were worth nothing. These calumnies were put an end to by the announcement, "Supper is ready." Boxes, chairs, and logs were placed round the table for seats. Turkey, venison, pork, opossum, maize bread, and the favorite beverage of the backwoodsman, coffee, disappeared so rapidly that soon nothing was left but the bones of the animals, the remembrance of the bread, and the grounds of the coffee. One after another rose when he had had enough, and then the woman-folk, who had wisely kept something for themselves, took their places. This is one of the customs of the West which always displeased me. The hostess seldom sits down to table with the men, except now and then at tea or coffee. The other custom, that of rising when they had had enough, without regard to those who remained at table, was not so bad.

After supper the company formed various groups, and the conversation turned on shooting, pasture grounds, the survey of the land that had recently been accomplished, and then on religion. Words soon ran high; for among the company were Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and unbelievers--but all disputes were put an end to by the arrival of two large jugs of whiskey, each containing about four bottles, which Collmar had sent his eldest son, a lad of fifteen, to fetch from a distant store. The boy had been obliged to ride slowly for fear of breaking the jugs.

The old bear-shooters were highly amused at the following account one of the party gave of a bear-hunt that had occurred in North Carolina, and which gave a sad picture of the low state to which field sports had fallen there. "In order to have a bear-hunt several farmers met, and let loose a tame two-year-old bear, giving him half an hour's law, and then following with horse and hound. The bear made straight for some hills, and in about an

hour and a half's time was chased into a tree. Not wishing to kill him, no one had brought a rifle; so I went to a house about half a mile off, and borrowed an axe to cut down the tree. The bear looked with inquisitive eyes on the proceedings below, and did not appear to suspect danger, till the tree fell with a tremendous crash; men and dogs threw themselves on the half-stunned bear, to secure him and take him home; but the majority voted for another hunt, so the dogs were held in and the bear let loose. After a time, we all went after him again; this time the chase lasted longer, as the bear swam a river, and to avoid a wetting we turned off to a bridge, giving the bear a great advantage. At length, when we got close to him, he took to an enormous fir-tree, and we all assembled under it; none of us knew how to get him down again. We were several miles from any house, and had left the axe behind us, and he seemed to set us at defiance in his lofty position. Nevertheless he did not seem quite at his ease, and kept looking anxiously first on one side, and then on the other, at the dogs who were jumping and barking round the trunk of the tree. This inspired an old Virginian of the party with a new idea. There were several pine branches lying about; so, taking up one of the heaviest and longest, he commenced striking the tree with all his force. At the first blow, the bear gave a start as if electrified, and at the second or third he darted down like lightning among the dogs, when he was soon secured and taken home. He was once more allowed to run about for a couple of years, when he grew very fat, and in good condition for killing, and he was slaughtered accordingly." When the story was ended, we wrapped ourselves in our blankets, and slept soundly, though occasionally disturbed by some thirsty souls who rose to get a drink. It was lucky for those who were lying in the outer rows that most of the water seekers wore moccasins.

We were up at daybreak, and prepared to build the house by first

making a large fire to warm our hands and feet. A man with an axe stood in each corner of the rising house, to cut the mortises and fit them into each other, while the rest of the party raised the logs; no trifling labor, as the house was to have two stories. By the evening, it was all up except the roof, when rain began to fall, and the logs became too slippery to admit of our standing on them; so the completion was left till dry weather.

We remained the night at Collmar's, and departed next day on our various ways, after a very frugal breakfast, for we had devoured all his store.

It was cold and foggy, and I was glad to get to Hogarth's, where I passed the night, returning next day to Slowtrap's. On relating the extraordinary behavior of the fox; he gave one of his smiles, and told many droll stories of the tricks of foxes, and one of a wild-cat, which attacked a man in the marshes of the Cash. The man had gone out early in the morning to shoot a turkey, and hearing a cock gobbling away with all his might, he placed himself behind a fallen tree, and began to use his call, when a wild-cat, probably deceived by the sound, sprang upon him like a fury, and attempted to bite through the veins of his neck. He found it impossible to pull the beast off, and was obliged to kill it behind his back with his scalping-knife; he was confined to his bed for several weeks, before he recovered from the ugly wounds caused by the cat's teeth and claws.

The weather cleared up next morning, and as old Slowtrap was still unprepared for his journey, I resolved to cross the river to shoot, and went to Curly's on the same day. As the deer kept themselves close hid in the daytime, we determined to have a shot in the night. An iron pan was soon prepared, and with my old German game-bag, which had accompanied me in all my wanderings, full of kindlers, our rolled-up blankets on our shoulders, we set off as soon as it was dark. A sharp wind had

made the leaves so dry in the course of a few hours, that our footsteps might be heard at three hundred yards off; consequently we saw no deer, and after carrying the pan to and fro for about three hours, we got tired of such useless trouble. On arriving at a small stream, we made a good fire, and after a frugal supper had set our chins for a very short time in motion, we rolled ourselves in our blankets, and lay down each with his dog pressed close to his side.

We rose at daybreak, and following different routes, appointed a rendezvous at Curly's, as we did not mean to make a long affair of it. Bad luck seemed to stick to us, for though we found plenty of trails, we saw no game. At length Bears grease found a fresh trail, and followed it up, often looking round to see if I was near him; so I kept as close as possible. Suddenly he stood still and pointed, and an old buck got up about fifty yards from us, and made a half circle round us. When I gave a hail, he stood still as if to ask what I wanted. It happened that I was to windward of him; and snuffing the air he gave a bound, which caused my ball to strike too far backwards under his spine, bringing him on his haunches. Bears grease had been observing it all with remarkable patience, only turning his head from one to the other;--but now giving vent to his eagerness he darted on the deer, seized him by the jaw, and springing over his back, brought him to the ground. I had now a good opportunity of cutting the deer's throat, but wished to give the dog a little practice, and I watched the struggle with the greatest interest. The buck was one of twelve branches, and had the full use of the forepart of his body. He strove to hit the dog with his sharp hoof, and to run his horns into him; but the dog cleverly eluded all his attempts, and at last seizing him by the throat, held him fast, while I ended his torments with my knife.

As Slowtrap had assured me that he would be ready to make the long-expected journey in a few days, I would not delay. I skinned

the deer, packed the two haunches in the skin, fed the dog, and trudged away heavily laden up and down hill to Curly's house.

Slowtrap was not ready. It was quite out of his character to be hurried. I saw no end of his awful procrastination; yet there was nothing left for it but patience. On my arrival, he was busy making a sledge to draw wood, that his wife might have enough for several weeks; this was no trifle, considering what enormous logs were consumed in these fireplaces.

The next day was a washing-day--and a washing-day in most places, and in Arkansas in particular, is an awful thing to a man whether married or not. Curly's young wife and sister had volunteered to assist, and to me was deputed the honor of escorting them; I buckled a blanket on the horse, and rode over, but as all three could not find room at once, I had to make two trips. All the American women are good riders. Curly's wife jumped up lightly behind me, and held on by my belt. Away we went at a gallop through the foaming though shallow river and thick forest, to Slowtrap's house, where having safely deposited my charge, I hastened back for the sister. I had now to think of my

own safety, as it would have been foolhardiness to have remained near three women on a washing-day. Being tired from yesterday's exertions, to take a long walk, I decided on shooting wild-fowl; so seizing Slowtrap's long rifle with a hundred balls to the pound, I sauntered down to Porter's Creek. The number of ducks was astounding. I lay down in a quiet shady place, and only fired when a good opportunity offered, Bears grease securing the prize. To be sure he frightened the others away, but only for a time; they soon returned, and by the evening I had bagged thirteen.

## CHAPTER III

### PETIT JEAN.

The two next days were wet and disagreeable. All we could do was to cut and stack wood. When the sun again shone through the clouds on the moist smoking ground, it was the 12th of December, and I went again over to Curly's to shoot another deer before the journey, if possible. Old Collmar was there and a young man of the name of Martin, who was rather eccentric; he was about twenty-five, and had not a single hair on his head. He used to tell extraordinary stories as to the cause of his baldness, in which he frequently got confused, when he would start up, rush out of the house, and never show himself again the whole day. Sometimes when he was engaged to work, he would steal away, leaving his wages, and sometimes his clothes. We gained from him, that he had married a wooden-legged woman in Illinois, and had left her there; but he told it in such a way that we doubted its truth. He told the most absurd stories of what he had seen and experienced, and flew into the most violent passions if the least doubt was manifested. Thus passed the afternoon. When it was dark Conwell and I took our firepan to try our luck once more. We went southwards towards the hills, in the first instance, and then turned to the westward, the stars shining brightly; but gradually thick clouds began to appear, and some flashes of lightning were visible. We continued walking in the same direction without seeing any deer, and may have gone on about three quarters of an hour when we came to a clearing. Looking upwards to find our way by the stars, we saw, to our horror, that the whole sky was one mass of black clouds. I had now left my compass at home, the wind blew in violent gusts, and thunder in the distance kindly gave us notice that a storm was approaching.

Nothing is easier than to lose one's way in the forest by

torchlight; for the fire lights up only a few paces around, giving a peculiar appearance to the trees, and all beyond thirty yards is the blackest darkness, and all points of the compass look alike. I now recollected that when I last carried the pan (for we took it in turns), I had observed it was lightning under the north star, which was not then covered by clouds, and we concluded that the storm must have advanced towards the east. A heavy clap of thunder informed us that we had no time to lose; so we beat our retreat, keeping the lightning on the left hand. We may have been about two miles from Curly's house; the lightning came quicker and brighter, the thunder louder, and we fled like two ghosts with our waving flame, when by one of the flashes Curly distinguished the roof of his abode; we hastened to it as fast as our legs would carry us, dashed in, and fastened the door, just as the hail came down as if it was trying to split every plank on the roof. As we looked at each other we broke into such an immoderate fit of laughter, that we could scarcely recover ourselves. The noise of our arrival, the thunder, hail, and our loud laugh awoke all the inmates. Martin's handkerchief, which he wore at night to cover his pate, had slipped off, and his queer appearance, as he looked at us with astonishment, set us off laughing again.

Meantime the hail gave place to heavy rain; but "savage tyrants reign not long," and presently the beauteous stars looked down quite cheerily upon us.

Storms are frequent in Arkansas, and occasionally hurricanes, which will sweep a district of a mile in width and several miles in length, leveling every thing in their path. After a time blackberries, thorns, and creepers, grow so luxuriantly over the heaps of fallen trees, as to make the thickets quite impenetrable in many places, offering a secure refuge to bears, & Conwell

On returning to Slowtrap's, we began in earnest to make preparations for the long-expected, long-delayed journey. In

Slowtrap's good steel mill we ground flour enough to last the family till his return, put our knives and rifles in order, and finally started on the morning of the 19th of December.

It was a bright cold winter's day, when, with our three dogs bounding about us, we commenced our march; Slowtrap on his nag, which carried, besides, a sack of provisions, our blankets, and my skins, while I stepped out briskly in a hunting-shirt, leggings, and moccasins, an untanned raccoon-skin-cap, and with no pack to carry. Slowtrap as he sat on his horse looked as if he must weigh at least twenty stone, his wife had heaped so many clothes on him, while my accouterments were all of summer stuff; but the exercise prevented me from feeling cold, as we jogged along a small cart-track through the thick forest.

The first part of our journey led through marshes, but we soon reached the hills that divide the "Petit Jean" from the "Fourche le Fave," and with them, dry land. The people of Yell county had selected a spot near the "Petit Jean" for a new county seat for the sessions. The infant town consisted of exactly the same number of buildings as Perryville, viz. two houses and a stable. When a town is founded in America, the streets are first marked off, by cutting away a piece of bark from the trees, and boards are nailed up at the corners with the names, such as, Main-street, Second-street, Walnut-street, Elm-street, & Conwell, and sometimes, when in the forest, a man may find that he is in the high street of a town.

If the position of the new-born, newly-christened town be a good one, it grows incredibly fast; in the contrary case, it looks desolate enough merchants and travelers desert it, houses are left unfinished and fall to pieces, and the court-house, as I once saw near White River, may be turned into a corn-crib.

In Danville, as the town was called, a speculative genius had established a small store, having removed from the Arkansas, about twenty miles off, with a cask of whiskey, and for whiskey

or money he bought all skins he could find. He had also powder, lead, coffee, sugar, and Lucifer matches; the latter article are wretchedly made in America. I exchanged all my skins for powder, lead, and coffee.

From hence, somewhat lightened, we proceeded to Spring Creek, which is thickly settled, one good farm bordering another, till we passed the water-mill, where they ceased, and we prepared for the night, which looked threatening. We halted by an overthrown pine-tree, unloaded the horse, and gave him some corn, collected firewood, and made a hut. Pine bark lay about in heaps; though worm-eaten in many places, it answered for want of better, and, used in double and treble layers, it made a very respectable sort of shed. When I thought it was finished, being rather tired, I flung myself on the ground; but my companion was not so easily satisfied; he laid on one piece of bark after another, and spread some to keep our limbs from the damp earth, and, whether I wished it or not, I must up and help till he pronounced "That'll do." Our simple supper was soon over; he then pulled off his shabby old coat, folded it up carefully, and laid it on his saddle as an extra pillow, spread his blanket on the pine bark with the edge to the fire, so that in lying on it, and covering himself with the other half, he might admit the warmth. After adding a few more logs to the fire, he pulled off his shoes, placing them near him with the soles upwards, that they might not fill with water in case of rain; he hung his socks under the bark roof, to keep them properly warm and dry; then laying himself carefully on his blanket, and covering himself with the other half, he was soon asleep.

I could not sleep, but lay close to the fire, which I kept stirring with a stick, making it crackle, and raising showers of sparks, which were carried by the wind far away into the dark forest, while I gave audience to my various thoughts. At length some

pattering drops warned me that it was time to seek shelter in the warm shed.

The rising sun found us again on the march, and nothing remarkable occurred till evening, when we passed an old plum orchard of the Cherokees. It was an unenclosed space, several miles in circumference, thickly covered with bushes from two to six feet high, bearing small, round, very sweet plums, which ripen in August. Similar plum orchards are found in many places near the Arkansas and Mississippi.

We struck the Arkansas before dark, opposite the little town of Pittsburg, and crossed over. As our purses were in a weak condition, we did not enter the town, but lighted a fire on the river's bank, made a shed of some planks which had been driven on shore, probably from a sunken boat, and were soon well housed. As we had marched quick, and kept in our dogs for fear of losing them, we had seen no game; our provisions were rather low, and henceforth the horse had no further weight to carry than the well-packed, goodly person of my companion, who now and then got off to give me a lift. We husbanded our stores so well, that we had something for supper and breakfast, and to feed the dogs, and laid ourselves comfortably down in our blankets.

Next day we passed along a part of the route by which some years ago a numerous body of eastern Indians, having given up their lands to the United States on condition of receiving other equally good lands in the West, were conducted by the parties who had engaged to provide for them on their journey. Numerous square holes cut in the fallen trees showed where the squaws had pounded their maize to make bread. More melancholy traces were visible in the bones of human beings and animals which were strewn about. Many a warrior and squaw died on the road from exhaustion, and the maladies engendered by their treatment; and their relations and friends could do nothing more for them than

fold them in their blankets, and cover them with boughs and bushes, to keep off the vultures, which followed their route by thousands, and soared over their heads; for their drivers would not give them time to dig a grave and bury their dead. The wolves, which also followed at no great distance, soon tore away so frail a covering, and scattered the bones in all directions. This is a sad instance of the abominable haggling spirit so prevalent in America. The government, to avoid trouble, had contracted with individuals for a certain sum, which was quite sufficient to have conveyed the poor Indians comfortably; but they were obliged to part with all they had for bread, selling their rifles and tomahawks, horses going for two and three dollars; and, while they died of hunger and distress, the contractors made a fortune.



## Chapter IV

### THE OZARKS.

About three in the afternoon we reached the Ozark mountains, and passed close by some farm buildings where there were several tame white turkeys. My dog, who was a capital fellow for turkeys, had as yet never seen any but wild, consequently black ones. He gave a side glance or two at them, and then passed on without further notice, until one crossed the road, and he came on the fresh trail, which he followed on the instant; but when he got close to the white bird, he kept first looking at the one, and then smelling at the other, as much as to say, "They don't agree," while the turkey walked off with long strides, turning his head from side to side to examine the stranger who was so close at his heels, and whose intentions he rather seemed to doubt. I called off the dog, and we stepped out at a good pace up a narrow ravine by the banks of a mountain stream. Narrow as the ravine was, we found houses in places where no one, at least no reasonable being, could ever have supposed they would have been erected, there being so little arable land near. One place particularly amused me--a turnip field, about sixty paces square, from one corner of which I saw smoke rising. As there was no trace of a building or of a human being to be seen, I was anxious to discover where the smoke came from, and on reaching the corner of the field, I found myself looking straight down a chimney. The house was built in a little hollow in the rock, probably to avoid encroaching on any part of the useful ground. But what could induce people to settle in such a hole, when so much good land was to be had in Arkansas, was more than I could divine.

We now turned to the left, and crossed the first spur towards the summit of the hills that divide the Mulberry from the Arkansas.

The ascent was rather steep, but we surmounted it without mishap, and were rewarded with a beautiful view over the country we had passed. While I was seated on a high piece of rock, contemplating the prospect, Slowtrap rolled a large stone to the edge of the declivity; then pushing it over, he set the dogs after it--these hearing the noise, flew in wild haste down the steep. The stone at first moved slowly, but as it gathered way in its descent, it made bounds of twenty and thirty feet, broke off young trees, and went thundering to the bottom in clouds of dust, the dogs still in chase. I did not much like it, fearing they might break their legs or necks. Bears-grease came back first, crouching and wagging his tail, as if he knew that he had committed an egregious folly. The others returned later, puffing and snorting. Slowtrap seemed to have been much amused: he sat comfortably on a rock, with his bridle on his left arm, and looked on without moving a muscle of his countenance.

We had a long march before us. It was ten miles to the nearest house, and we had nothing eatable left, either for ourselves or the horse; it was moreover getting dark. Slowtrap said we must keep on the hill for six or seven miles, and then turn down towards the Mulberry to the house.

It grew darker and darker. A narrow unfrequented footpath covered with yellow leaves was our only guide, which I followed up with undivided attention, Slowtrap riding slowly after me. A thin penetrating rain set in with the night; yet, indefatigably, and with my nose nearly on the ground, I kept to the almost invisible path, till about ten o'clock, when I stopped, and told Slowtrap that either the path ended here, or I had missed it; which of the two was the case I could not say. Slowtrap, who had followed patiently without speaking a word, asked if I thought I could find the trail again on retracing my steps. The weather was not favorable for conversation; I shouldered my rifle, went some way

back, made a circle, and found a strip of darker ground among the leaves. I called out, and my companion came, leading his horse, and said that I might ride, and he would follow up the path, as his eyes were more accustomed to forest work than mine. Tired with the long day's march, I was not sorry for this, and was soon in the saddle, while Slowtrap, stooping low, preceded me about two hundred paces; but he came to a stand where I had stopped, and said the path ended there. We could not be far from the descent to the Mulberry, for the trees were thinner, and Slowtrap said that if it were not so dark, we might be able to see the whole of its valley. At present nothing was to be seen but our miserable plight.

It is dangerous to lose one's way in these hills, as precipices occur where least suspected. The rain now fell in torrents, and we were as wet as drowned rats. At length we decided on descending the hill straight before us, lead where it would. It was steep and slippery, and although we led the horse, we were often in danger of falling into one of the steep ravines; we passed so near one that we heard the stones fall to the bottom as they were kicked away by the horse's feet.

It may have been about eleven o'clock when the dogs gave the first signs of life, by a growl and a low bark. Then the oldest of them, a good old fellow, covered with honorable scars, gave a short howl. It was answered by several dogs in the distance; this inspired us with fresh courage, and we hastened down the hill towards the sound. When the strange dogs left off barking, we easily excited them again by imitating the howl of a wolf. We gained at once the foot of the hill and a mountain stream, and came to a small house, from whence we had heard the bark of the dogs. We entered and obtained shelter, but no hearty welcome.

Next morning, as we were not very well pleased with our host, who did not care about us, and fearing that the rivers we had to cross might swell with rain--an event which soon occurs in the

mountains--we left at daylight, and proceeded to a farmer's, named Davis, about half a mile off on the other side of the river; here we were received kindly and hospitably.

Mr. Davis would by no means allow us to proceed, as it had poured with rain the whole night, and all the brooks were rushing torrents; so, taking charge of our things, he made us sit by the fire, and seemed highly gratified at the pleasure its warmth afforded us. His family were very agreeable, and I was quite sorry to part with them so soon as the next morning; but by that time the waters fell, and Slowtrap was in a hurry to get on. However, it was hard work to get through some of the rivers, especially as we had but one horse. Luckily my companion knew the country too well to expose us to the chance of sleeping again in the forest, and this evening, wet, tired, and half frozen, we arrived at the abode of an old squatter.

This day we had crossed the main range of the "Boston divide," which parts the waters of the Mulberry from the White river, and found ourselves on the latter, which, here, we could leap across, though further down it is navigated by steamers. The country and vegetation differed considerably from that south of the Arkansas. There was no trace of fir; the mountains were covered with oak, beech, and hickory, all at this season without leaves, which, to an eye accustomed to green hollows, seemed rather mournful and monotonous. It struck me as extraordinary that the best and most fertile land was on the hill tops, where, in other places it is generally the worst; here grew black walnut, wild cherry, with stems sometimes twenty inches in diameter, black locust, and sugar maple, trees which generally grow only in the richest soils. The black locust was very frequent, and its long sharp thorns are by no means pleasant on a journey.

About noon we passed a log house, at the door of which stood a fat red-haired man. When we had passed, Slowtrap told me that,



four years ago, that man had bought a clock; and after he had had it two days, he doubted whether all was right inside; so he took it to pieces, and when satisfied, put it together again, and people said that when he had done so, he had wheels enough left for another clock.

It was Christmas eve, and growing dark. My heart sunk as I remembered former joys of this season, and thought of my present loneliness. Strange! that recollections should be so sweet and yet so bitter.

## Chapter V

### THE WHITE RIVER.

In good time we arrived at old Conwell's, Slowtrap's father-in-law. He lived in a block-house, surrounded by mountains covered with trees, close to the bank of the White river, which was narrow enough to be bridged by a tree. The family were assembled round the fire; Conwell himself was absent. A matron of pleasing appearance rose from her seat on the entrance of her son-in-law, and cordially shook his hand, while two fine boys of eleven and eight jumped up to welcome him; another person in the room, a young graceful girl, who at first kept modestly in the background, then came forward to greet her brother-in-law, who addressed her as Sophy; neither was the stranger overlooked, but received a hearty welcome from all. I, who, a few minutes before, had felt so deserted and miserable, now experienced a silent joy, as I looked on the amiable, honorable countenance of the mother, the mild expression of the daughter, and the open, happy faces of the two boys. It was as if I had found new relations, and was once again at home. Never in my life had I felt, from the first moment, so completely domesticated as with these people.

In about half an hour old Conwell came in: if ever uprightness was stamped upon any countenance, it was upon his; his hair was white as snow, but his step was as springy as he moved about in his hunting-shirt, leggins, moccasins, and bare neck, as if he had seen but twenty years. After we had been seated about an hour, it seemed as if I had known him from childhood, and the evening flew past with incredible swiftness.

The cold was very sharp on Christmas-day, and we were delighting in a glorious fire, when John, the youngest boy, ran in, and said there was a large gang of turkeys in the corn. I seized my

rifle, called Bears grease, and was soon in the field. No sooner had the dog found the scent, than he was among them, and they flew to the neighboring trees. I knocked over one, loaded, and tried for another, leaving Bears grease to watch the prize, as several pigs were near us. Not being able to get another shot, I returned to the dog, and found him with his paws full of business. Another larger dog had come to have a smell at the turkey; Bears grease, mistaking his intentions and my instructions, attacked the stranger, threw him over, and held him fast, with the fiercest countenance in the world; but when he saw me coming he began to wag his tail, being thus, like Janus, severe in front and amicable behind. I released the stranger from his disagreeable position, and patted and soothed Bears grease to express my approbation and satisfaction at his good behavior; but he continued to give an occasional growl and scowl at the other dog.

I amused myself for a couple of days with turkey shooting, leaving Slowtrap time to arrange his affairs, when he informed me that he had concluded his business quicker than he had expected, and now meant to return home. This was disagreeable to me for two reasons--first, because he was a very pleasant companion; and, secondly, because he was so well acquainted with the mountains. However, there was no persuading him to remain, and he fixed on the following morning for his departure.

In the afternoon, as the sun was bright and warm, we formed a merry party in front of the house; but Slowtrap who never could bear lying or sitting on the cold ground, sat himself on the fence, which was about five feet high, and told us some of his humorous stories with his usual gravity. Meantime several cows had assembled on the other side of the fence. It has already been said that Slowtrap wore a shabby old coat, whereof the tails hung low outside the fence. In the morning he had been walking about the hills, and had been very hot; and his pocket-handkerchief, moist

with perspiration, was in one of his pockets. It is well known that cows are fond of salt and saline substances, and they had probably divined that something of the sort was in one of those pockets. One, rather bolder than the rest, had quietly approached, taken the flap in her mouth, and was contentedly chewing it. I had observed the whole proceeding with great amusement; but fearing that his coat was in danger of being reduced to a state of pulp, I called out to him to look behind. He looked round, beheld the cow chewing his coat-tails with the greatest placidity, and raised one of his long arms to drive her away. The cow, frightened at the long arm, made a retreat; but unluckily one of the buttons caught between her teeth, and she gave a sudden wrench to poor Slowtrap, who was nicely balanced at the top of the fence; in a moment his legs rose in the air, like the two chimneys of a steamer, and then his body tumbled to the ground. What happened afterwards, no one could tell, as we all followed his example, in a convulsion of laughter.

On the 28th December my old companion mounted his steed, and shaking hands with his relations and me, was soon out of sight in the forest. I prepared for the mountains, and Conwell said he would willingly go with me, but that he had business for some days; I answered, that I would go first, not to be a burden to him, at which he was much vexed, and requested me not to go without him, concluding his kind invitation to remain in his house, by saying that I was "as welcome as the flowers in May." I could not withstand this, and remained with much pleasure. He rode away the same day, and returned on the following evening. In the afternoon it came on to snow, and continued till late at night, so that we expected glorious weather for shooting; but our joy did not last long, for it soon became warm again. Nevertheless we got every thing in readiness, mended moccasins, cast balls, sharpened knives, and, on the 30th, we proceeded to the Pilot rock, at the source of the Hurricane. After crossing the Boston divide, we

stopped on the slope, where we found a spring of delicious water, and "struck camp." The night was clear and cold, but the heat of the day had spoiled all the beautiful snow. Stretched before the fire, we rested our weary limbs after the exertions of the day, and were soon sound asleep, with our dogs beside us.

As we were not yet on our intended ground, we rose early, descended the mountain, crossed the Hurricane, and fixed upon a spot for our night's camp, where we left Conwell's horse, with our blankets, and provisions. Here we separated to mount the hill on different routes. The Hurricane is a mountain stream, taking its name from a hurricane which raged near its mouth some time ago, leaving traces that are still visible. It runs into the Mulberry, and flows with it into the Arkansas.

Conwell went to the left, I to the right; the hill was in places so steep, that I was obliged to lift the dog up before me. At length I gained a flat terrace. The terrace formation is characteristic of these mountains; seen from below they do not appear very high, because only the top of the next division is visible; but when one is surmounted, another and another arises, and people maintain that when you come to the highest there is always one more.

The terrace on which I found myself was about one hundred and eighty paces wide. Advancing cautiously towards the middle, keeping a sharp look-out, I perceived a doe quietly grazing, and coming towards me. I whistled, she stopped, bounded upwards with the shot, ran about fifty paces towards me, and fell dead. She was in excellent condition--I hung her up, and went on. At the end of the terrace, where a spring dashed down the rock, I observed signs of a bear; he had turned over several stones to find worms, and had bitten off some of the bushes to make a bed; seeing nothing more, I returned to the camp, to have the help of my companion to follow up the trail next day, taking half the doe on my shoulders as I went along. I found Conwell occupied with a

very fat turkey.

Tired with all the climbing, we wrapped ourselves in our blankets, and threw ourselves down for a nap; but the sun setting, and wind getting colder and sharper, did not allow us much repose, but warned us to make a fire, and a good fire too, for the night. Wood was abundant, and we had only to move a few steps for as much as we wanted. The sun had hardly disappeared behind the trees on the western mountains, when it became dark in our ravine; the twilight did not last more than ten minutes. It was the last day of the year. In my native land, many a happy pair were forgetting past pains and sorrows in the tumult of the dance in lighted halls; while I was stretched under the starry skies beside a crackling fire in the forest, my trusty rifle and faithful dog by my side. I had no mind for dancing or music; for seven months I had not heard from home, and seemed to have got wedged in among the mountains, with the world closed behind me, all retreat cut off, and nothing left but to advance: and yet the future offered no inviting picture; alone, in the endless wilderness, I stood, with hair turning gray--a solitary hunter, leaning on my rifle, separated from all I loved.

Old Hawkeye, must have had many a sorrowful hour.

Meantime, my companion, leaning on his elbow, was gazing on the fire, and lost in recollections of the past; but his past must have been a happy one, for he often smiled to himself. He had lived an active life, and looked forward to a happy old age, in the circle of an amiable family, in the vicinity of his married children, in the enjoyment of health and strength. Wherefore should he be unhappy?

I stood up to change the current of my thoughts, poked at the fire, laid the logs together, which were burnt through the middle, and reposed again on my blanket. Conwell told me he was sixty-two years old to-day, 31st of December, 1841; and yet he was so

strong and active that I had to exert myself to keep up with him. He spoke of his past life; how he had continually preceded civilization, first in Carolina, then in Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and now in the Ozark mountains, and he complained that people were gathering too thick about him, and said he felt a strong inclination to make another move. He mentioned how fortunate and happy he was in his family. He spoke of his children, and as I listened to him my troubled thoughts were soothed; it was as if one of my own family was speaking. Thus passed our evening till sleep weighed down our eyelids, and wrapped in our blankets past and future were forgotten.

Next morning, as the tips of the western mountains were lighted up with the first rays of the rising sun, we woke from our lairs, shook off the wreaths of frost, and joyfully inhaled the fresh morning air; it was bitter cold, the water in our tin cups was all frozen, as was the meat, but a breakfast fit for a prince was soon smoking before us—juicy venison, fat turkey, good strong coffee, and maize bread. Where was the hotel that could afford fare as good? but man is fated never to be satisfied—my companion sighed for bear.

Before breakfast was quite ready I went to the creek which flowed at a few paces from our camp, to have a good wash, and finding a hole with deep water as clear as crystal, I threw off my clothes, and plunged under the cool element. It was a delicious treat, and I did not feel the cold till I got out; but I was soon by the fire, and by the time I had my clothes on I felt such an animating glow, and such strength that I could almost have torn an oak up by the roots. Old Conwell looked on smiling, but thought it too cold to plunge in, and contented himself with washing face, breast, hands, and feet. Thus refreshed, we sat down to breakfast; turkey, venison, coffee, and bread disappeared with terrific rapidity; even Bears grease appeared surprised sitting with his

mouth wide open, though Conwell maintained that he held it open more conveniently to catch the morsels I threw to him from time to time; perhaps he was right.

After these trifles, half a turkey, and the greater part of a haunch of venison had been safely disposed of to the general satisfaction, we set off to look for the bear, tokens of whose whereabouts I had seen the day before. On arriving at the place, the dogs showed signs of excitement, and running down the steep they soon began to give tongue. We followed as fast as we could, and came to a large detached rock, behind which a cave ran into the mountain. Several marks showed that the bear was at home; the dogs barked furiously, and I laid aside my rifle and pouch, and was about to enter the cave with my drawn knife, when Bruin began to suspect mischief. He was right opposite the entrance, but a slight bend in the cave, which was only eight feet deep, prevented our seeing him. He would not have cared much for the dogs, but as I approached the wind was behind me; the moment he discovered me he began snorting and growling, and made a rush which nearly upset me, although I sprang on one side. Conwell, who had seen many such affairs, coolly stood at the entrance with his rifle cocked, watching my proceedings. The report of the rifle was heard before I and the dogs had recovered our composure after the rush; the bear seemed to be determined that nothing should stop him, and disappeared in a gorge; but the dogs, roused by the shot were soon on his traces. The old man laughed heartily as he saw me standing knife in hand quite disconcerted at the mouth of the cave, and regretted that he had not been able to give all his attention to my admirable jump, as he was obliged to look after the beast.

We followed the dogs, and on examining a rock which the bear had crossed, we found drops of dark blood, and were tolerably sure of him. Weakened with loss of blood, he had not run far

before the dogs came up with him. As they were both young and untrained to bears, he had not much trouble in keeping them off, but they answered our purpose in stopping him. I came up just as he had shaken off the dogs, and was climbing a steep bluff. I fired and struck his right paw, and as he fell the dogs seized him again; my companion now arrived, and coolly taking aim, sent a ball through his heart. He was a fat two-year-old, and promised a delicate repast; we decided on taking him home. So while Conwell skinned and cut him up, I returned to the camp to fetch the horse with our blankets and game, and as I rode past I brought away the other half of the doe, which was too good to leave behind. As the day was now far advanced, and the horse had about 200 lbs. to carry, we resolved to camp for the night near the first spring we came to.

As we crossed a flat on the top of a mountain we heard a horrible noise from a large gang of turkeys, a sure sign of bad weather. Conwell sprang from his horse, and we ran towards the sound. When near enough I cheered on the dog, and in an instant the whole forest was alive with turkeys. A great big fellow flapped into a tree about sixty yards in front of me, and fell to the ground with a ball from my rifle. While loading, I observed Conwell going about with his rifle at his cheek, carefully watching all the long necks; then he stopped, took aim, and fired. But the turkey only reeled on the bough, and recovered himself. As soon as I was loaded I knocked over a second, and by this time the greater part of the gang had made off; but the one Conwell had hit sat still, badly wounded, with the blood dropping fast. Conwell had now loaded again, and shot him through the head. On my asking why he had not selected another, as he was sure of this one, he answered, that this was the fattest and heaviest of the whole gang; and he was right. Mine were both large birds, but his weighed more by three pounds. He laughed, and said he had not looked out

for the best in vain, and told me, "when the turkeys are all sitting on the trees, frightened at the dogs, there is no occasion to be in a hurry to shoot the first that comes--a good sportsman should choose the best, which is easily done; a short thick neck is the infallible sign. The leaner the turkey, the longer and thinner his neck. The bird seems larger, but take care to shoot the thick-necks, and I'll wager that they ain't so bad to eat." Long experience has since taught me that he was right, but it required some time before I was cool enough to look at the turkeys on their perch, and make a choice among them. We opened them on the spot; for it is extraordinary how soon they spoil, even in cold weather, if this is not done. We threw two of them over the horse, while I shouldered the third; and in a very short time we came to a spring of good water, and made a camp for the night.

One of the results of our camping out, with supper and breakfast, was the disappearance of one of the turkeys and half the bear's ribs. With strength well recruited we set off for the dwelling of my old friend, and reached it about two in the afternoon. It was dark by the time when the skins were stretched and the meat salted, when we sat round the fire and talked over old times.

We were tired and went betimes to bed, intending to sally forth early next morning; but the rain poured down the whole night, and we had forgotten to take our blankets in from the fence, so that, it may be supposed, they were rather damp; however, we were not vexed. We had plenty of provisions; a little repose would not hurt us, especially as we were looking forward to fresh adventures.

We made ourselves comfortable, provided wood, and had placed ourselves in a half circle round the fire, when little John ran in and told us that he was just come from a neighbor's, who had sent out his negro to count the little pigs, which a sow was bringing with her out of the forest. After a little while he came in, and said

gravely, that he had counted nineteen, but that one had run about so, that he could not count him. Conwell now commenced a story of his early days, in the following words:--“About forty years ago my parents moved into the Cumberland mountains; and as the land was good and fertile, and game plentiful, a little settlement was soon made. We were very comfortable, grew as much Indian corn as we wanted, had plenty of venison, bear, and wild honey, and we could always procure powder, coffee, and whatever else we wanted in exchange for our bears’ fat, skins, & Conwell; so that every one would have allowed that we could not be better off, but for one circumstance that embittered our existence and exposed us to numberless dangers. There was a tribe of Tuskarora Indians in our vicinity, who had been driven out of the north, probably by the French, and who plundered and murdered whenever they found an opportunity. Among other things, they had stolen a number of horses, and that so cunningly, that for a long time they eluded all our efforts to trace them. The mountains ended in a bluff several miles long, and from twenty to thirty feet high, so steep that no bear, let alone a horse, could have descended it. As soon as a horse was missed, those who went to seek him examined each end of the cliff, without ever finding any traces of the animal. I was then about twenty-two years old, and one day I was out with my dog,--and such a dog I have never seen since. Old Beef here is a good fellow, but that one had a cross of a bull in him; well, we came on the trail of a fat bear--for fat he was--of that I had infallible signs; in the first place, because he had crossed a sandy bed of a small stream where his footsteps were deeply impressed, showing the balls round and full; secondly, I found that he had not eaten the acorns with their cups, but had taken the trouble to separate them. I fancied he could not be far off, and followed up the trail, which led towards the bluff; at about two hundred yards from it, he had entered the stony bed of a brook. I kept close up

with the dog, making as little noise as possible, and only taking my eye off the trail when a turn or higher ground gave me a chance of seeing the beast. As I proceeded I was astonished to find traces of horses leading towards the bluff. Two capital horses had been stolen from us a few nights before, and we had looked everywhere for traces of them, without success; of course, no one thought of looking on the edge of the cliff.

“My previous astonishment was nothing to what I experienced, when I came to the place, where, after heavy rain, the brook falls over the cliff, but which in dry weather does not contain a drop of water, and found, where the depth might be about twenty feet, two fir-trees, rounded, and placed standing against the rock, just so far apart that a horse might slide down them, but could not fall through; that this was the use they had been put to was evident from the marks of the struggles of the horses, before they were launched, and from patches of horsehair sticking to the poles. That the bear had descended by these means was clear from the marks of his claws in the wood.

“It would not have done for the dog;--besides the discovery was too important for delay, and I hastened home to give information. We had not long to wait to turn it to account. The Indians, who had stolen a couple of horses a few nights before, returned for some more the same evening. Luckily, our watchmen gave the alarm in time, and they had hardly made off with their booty, when we started by a nearer road, as they were obliged to choose the most stony paths, in order to leave as few traces as possible, and thus made a long circuit.

“About nine in the morning we arrived opposite the fir-trees, and hid ourselves in the trees and behind rocks to await the redskins. About noon we began to think that they must have discovered our trail, and would not appear; but we resolved to wait till dark. We were fifteen in all, and decided not to fire till every man was sure

of his mark; and, with beating hearts, we listened for the slightest sounds. We had almost given up the hopes of seeing them, when a single warrior appeared, in his blanket dress, and descended the cliff. He was sent to reconnoiter, and had not the slightest suspicion of danger; for he passed close before my uncle Ben, who, not able to resist the temptation, or fancying that he was discovered, I know not which, contrary to his usual caution, fired. The savage leaped high in the air, and fell on his face without a groan.

"Now, whether the Indians thought that their spy had shot something, or whether they thought themselves strong enough to disregard a single man, whom chance might have brought to the spot, in less than five minutes the whole troop were on the edge of the bluff, about eighty paces from our hiding-place. They had with them only the four horses which they had lately stolen, and as we well knew that it would be vain to seek them if once their suspicions were roused, we took aim in silence. The party consisted of nine men, four of them on horseback; we might easily have killed them all, but were too eager to recover the horses; so it happened that all aimed at the riders. I had not been in quite such a hurry, and when the others turned to fly I aimed at one just as he was entering the thicket; he gave a spring and threw off his blanket; I saw the blood spurt out, but he was soon out of sight, and as I could not find his body, I think he must have escaped.

"We took the arms and dresses of the slain, bound them on the horses, left the corpses to the wolves and vultures, and entered the settlement in triumph the same evening. It was long before we saw any thing more of the Tuskaroras, who withdrew in alarm towards Lake Ontario."

By this time dinner was ready, and after dinner we took a siesta; then, what with reading and conversation, it was evening before

we were aware. I was now asked to give information about the old world, and to tell them whether kings would take off people's heads when they chose—and how houses were built when there was so little wood--and what people did in the winter. They were much astonished when I mentioned that we did not grow Indian corn, nor let the cattle run wild; but when I said that we sometimes planted trees, the children shook their heads, and even the old ones thought that I was practicing on their credulity; they also wanted to know if kings and queens always wore their crowns, and if they walked about with their scepters, and what the nobility looked like.



## Chapter VI

### WAR EAGLE CREEK

Next morning, starting with the rising sun, we took a direction towards the Richland and War-eagle, two streams which flow into the White river. We took no provisions with us, but rode out with only the blankets on the horses, as Conwell supposed we should find plenty of game. On arriving on our ground, we turned the horses loose, who bent their steps homewards, grazing as they went. We took different courses, agreeing to return in the evening to the place where our blankets were hanging up. I walked cautiously and slowly, but saw nothing of either deer or turkey; once I heard the report of Conwell's rifle. When I returned to the camp I made a good fire, spread my blanket, placed my rifle in readiness, and laid me down to rest. About sunset I heard a light step; at first I thought it was a deer--it was Conwell, without game or dog. He sat down by my side on the blanket, and observing that he supposed I must be very hungry, he gave a faint smile, and said

that he could fast until tomorrow evening. He might well laugh. He said his dog was after a deer which he had shot, and, judging from the marks, he must have been hit in the fleshy part of the haunch; the dog, being young, could not be called off after once catching the scent, and dog and deer were soon out of sight.

While he was talking, Bears grease rose up and snuffed the air; Conwell thought it must be his dog who had found his trail. As I supposed so too I took no notice, until I thought I heard a short bark, and Bears grease, growling lightly, gave me a significant look. I jumped up with my rifle, and in a minute a noble buck, with horns laid back, rushed by at full speed, at about twenty paces from the camp. I sent a ball into him, and my dog was instantly close on his heels. He did not run far; my ball had

broken the left leg, and passed through the right. After running about 200 paces, he sprang into the Richland, on whose banks we were encamped, and seemed resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible. The dogs were upon him, but, as they were forced to swim, while he touched the bottom, he had not much difficulty in shaking them off again. Conwell remained lying as if it were no concern of his, so I seized his rifle, ran to the bank, ended the poor animal's torments with a ball through his brain, and plunged into the water to pull him out. Now we had meat in plenty; the skin and haunches were hung up, the ribs roasted, and the dogs fed before dark.

We slept well all night, and were up early, but the leaves were so dry that we found nothing but one turkey, which Conwell knocked over. However, the sky began to get cloudy, and as we had meat for the present, our hopes rose. It came on to blow from the north, but we were protected by a bank of about ten feet high, and though we could not sit close to it on account of sharp stones, yet it kept off some of the cold wind, and a glorious fire soon made us forget it.

Supper was over, and Conwell had taken off one of his moccasins to take a stone out, when he said that it reminded him of something that had happened to him a long time ago when he was a child. I was already covered up in my blanket, but finding that he had a mind to talk, I roused up, gave the fire a poke that made the sparks fly, and leaning back, with Bears grease for a pillow, who seemed well pleased with the arrangement, I awaited the commencement of his narrative.

When I got up, Conwell stopped; but now passing his hand over his face, he began:--

"I was between five and six years old when my father made my first pair of moccasins, for he was a very good shoemaker, and had always made strong shoes for children, though he himself



always wore moccasins; but, at my earnest, repeated request, he made a pair for me, and warned me particularly not to lose them. On this same day a peddler had been in the house, and had persuaded my father to buy a pair of large boots, as very serviceable for bad weather;--and as it had rained a great deal lately, he put them on, took his rifle, and sallied forth to the forest. He was hardly gone when I wished to wear my new moccasins; and, to my horror, found that one was missing. In vain I searched the house from top to bottom; it was gone, and the other seemed to be there only to remind me of my loss, and the punishment awaiting me. With a beating heart I saw my father return earlier than I had expected, out of humor with the bad weather and bad sport; and he asked roughly, why I was running about barefoot. With tears in my eyes I told him that I could not find one of the moccasins, and that I thought the cat must have run off with it. He said he would "cat me", and that if I did not find the other before night I should suffer for it. With a sorrowful heart I recommenced my search, and all my brothers helped me. Meantime my father had sat himself by the fire, and complained that something in his boot had plagued him the whole day; so, pulling it off, and feeling inside, what should he find but my much-bemoaned moccasin. It is easier to imagine my delight than to express it."

Conwell rolled himself in his blanket and fell asleep, still smiling at the recollection. I could not sleep; his story had recalled events of my own childhood, and I kept gazing at the strange and changing figures in the fire. Bears-grease was lying close to me, with his head on my shoulder; he had raised it several times, and snuffed the air, and again lain down. At length he roused up and gave a slight growl. I thought I heard something, and looking up to the bank behind me, I was astonished to find two glowing eyeballs steadily fixed upon me. My head being between the fire and the animal, I could see them plainly just

above the bank. It must be a panther, and, judging from the position, ready to spring. My rifle, as usual, lay ready; so, half raising myself, that I might have the fire in a line with the two sights, I aimed between the two fiery balls, and the rocks reechoed the report.

Old Conwell was up like lightning with his rifle ready, and the dogs hunted about while I reloaded, but all was as silent as the grave. The old fellow shook his head, and asked what on earth I had been firing at. I finished loading without a word, then taking a brand from the fire and going about twenty paces to a slope in the bank, I mounted, and found an immense panther, quite dead. I threw him over, and Conwell dragged him to the fire; the ball had pierced his brain through the right eye. He was a very powerful beast, had enormous fangs, and when we cut him open, his stomach was found quite empty. He must have been attracted to the fire by hunger, and Conwell thought he might have smelt the venison; he would probably have ventured a spring as soon as the fire had burnt low; the dogs could not scent him, as he was so much above us. After skinning him we threw the carcass into the river below the camp, as the dogs would not touch it. We slept the rest of the night undisturbed.

A light rain fell next morning, which, in about an hour, moistened the dead leaves sufficiently for us to walk without making a noise; so I made haste to stretch the panther's skin, and we set off, each as before taking a separate path. Before I had gone half a mile I saw two deer grazing; just at this moment Conwell's gun was heard at some distance, and they both raised their heads and listened attentively, but perceiving nothing suspicious, they began to feed again. They were a doe and a year-old fawn, and when they were in a line I fired; the doe, which was nearest, fell at once, and the fawn after running about fifty yards. They were very fat, and I hung them up.

In hanging up deer it is necessary to take precautions against the vultures, which are a great annoyance to sportsmen. The best way of securing the deer, whose skin they would ruin with their beaks, is to hang them up by their heads, so that the vultures may have no point of support, and must content themselves with pecking at the skull. There is also a large crow, which tries to steal the fat; but they may be kept off by placing two peeled sticks crosswise on the deer--for the crows will not venture their heads between two such suspicious-looking objects.

Continuing my march, I came to the bank of a stream running into the Richland, when I saw a wolf spring out of a thicket on the opposite side, about eighty paces off; he ran about fifty yards and then stopped, but not long enough for me to take aim; finally he disappeared among some rocks. I crossed over to the thicket to see how Bears grease would take the scent of a wolf; all his hairs bristled up the moment he came to the yet warm lair.

Late in the afternoon, on my way to the camp, I struck a fresh bear's trail, and followed it up, though it led me out of my way. Meantime it began to rain harder, and coming to a broad stream, which the bear had crossed, my dog lost the trail. As it was too late to return to the camp, I considered myself lucky in finding a cave, two feet deep in leaves driven in by the wind. Without making a fire, which would have been dangerous, I crept in, taking Bears grease for a pillow, who was much pleased thereby, and, spite of wet clothes, I slept well till morning, covered up with the leaves.

The morning was cold and wet, my clothes were still damp from yesterday's rain, and I was as hungry as a lion; so altogether I did not feel quite so comfortable as I could wish. But walking quick to warm myself, in about an hour's time I reached the place where I had left the two deer, hung the fawn over my shoulders, and not long after gained the camp.

The fire was burning bright which Conwell had only lately left, and it was no small quantity of venison that I put down to roast. Having appeased my appetite, and fed Bears grease, I laid down again to rest. After an hour's time, as Conwell did not return, I set off again; it was still very cold. As I was passing a small ravine I saw a young buck feeding, without the slightest suspicion of danger. As I was within distance, I aimed and fired; he fell as if shot through the brain, but my ball had struck too high, so that at the moment when I came up to seize him he recovered himself, and rose on his forelegs. I saw on the instant that there was no time to lose, and threw myself upon him. The dog had also seized him, and I was in the act of drawing my knife to plunge in his throat, when he made a sudden effort, and we all three tumbled down a declivity of nine or ten feet. In falling I had dropped my knife, which fell among the stones, and I felt much pain in my head and left side; but neither I nor Bears grease had let go our hold. The poor animal made most desperate efforts to escape, and with our greatest exertions it was hardly possible for us to hold him. Without a knife there was but one method of securing him; a cruel one, indeed, but if I had to bite his neck through with my teeth I would not let him go. I threw him over on his side, and smashed his forelegs with a sharp stone. Thus crippled, Bears grease could hold him; I jumped up, found my knife, and ended the poor creature's torments.

I succeeded in slinging it with a great deal of trouble, my left side paining me exceedingly; however I managed to climb up the steep, recovered and loaded my rifle, and hobbled towards the camp, intending to remain quiet the rest of the day.

I found my old friend awaiting me. He had killed four bucks, and brought away their haunches, the rest not being good eating at this season. We settled to shoot towards the house next day, and then to take horses to carry home the game we had shot.

On our way homewards we only killed three turkeys. We caught the horses the same evening, and once more reposed our weary limbs among my old friend's family circle.

At midnight it began to rain, and towards morning it poured in torrents. The game was not to be thought of, and we sat round the fire amusing ourselves with old stories and anecdotes. As we were talking of the prairies, Conwell told us one of his adventures after buffaloes.

"Not many years ago, when I lived in the Kickapoo prairie, in Missouri, four of us set out one morning to shoot buffaloes. It was bitter cold, and we rode rapidly over the frozen ground. On gaining an elevation, we descried a herd in the distance, and made towards them. When about half a mile from them they discovered us, and ran off, we after them helter-skelter. The hindmost was a cow, too fat to keep up with the others, so we all singled her out for our mark. After galloping for about a mile, she received all our balls, and fell, when we secured her. The wind was now blowing from the north-west, almost cold enough to freeze the marrow in our bones, and the dry buffalo dung, the only fuel in the prairies, made but a poor fire. The nearest wood was about a mile from the place where the cow fell, and a debate arose whether we should fetch the wood to the buffalo, or carry the buffalo to the wood. We thought the latter easier. One of the party, named Turner, began to strip off the skin; we offered to help him, but he would not permit it; so, willingly leaving the cold work to him, we made as good a fire as we could for him to warm his hands by. When the skin was off, we cut off the prime pieces, took the marrow-bones, packed them in the skin, threw them over a horse, and brought them to the nearest wood, where we luckily found water. Our four tomahawks soon cut wood enough, and we made a roaring fire; when it was burnt to charcoal we stuck in the marrow-bones, first one end, then the other; and certainly there is

no more delicate eating for the backwoodsman than buffalo marrow, except bear's ribs, and wild honey. The meat was rather tough, and nothing particular.

"It was now getting dark, and we began to prepare our camp. One of the party proposed, instead of each rolling himself separately in his blanket, that we should spread the skin, which was large enough to hold us all, and then lay all the blankets over us. But Turner objected, and maintained that as he had skinned the cow alone, he alone would sleep in it. It was all the same to us; we all had good blankets, and could make ourselves comfortable by the fire, which we closely surrounded, while Turner wrapped himself in his heavy skin, with the hairy side inwards;--and we were all soon asleep.

"The weather was extremely cold, and we were obliged to get up several times in the course of the night, to lay on fresh wood, though Turner never moved out of his warm skin. Towards morning the wind changed to north-east, and the sky threatening a snow-storm, we decided on returning home as soon as possible, to avoid the approaching storm, or at any rate to get better shelter than the open prairie afforded. So we swallowed our breakfasts quickly, and saddled the horses, which had been feeding on the dry grass, and now approached as close as they could to the fire. We called Turner several times to make him get up, but a slight motion of the hide was the only answer. At length, a half smothered cry for help issued from the skin. We rushed to Turner in alarm, fearing something serious, but burst into a roar of laughter, on finding that he was frozen in, and could not move a limb. We rolled him to the fire, to thaw the skin, and set him free; the rolling and the heat made him feel rather giddy, but a hot marrow-bone restored him;--and then loading the horses with the softened skin, and the remainder of the meat, we reached home before the storm, which came on that evening with tremendous

force.”

The weather continued gloomy enough, the clouds hanging about the trees, as if they were seeking shelter from the wind, which was driving them from the rocky mountains. All the cattle collected near the house, with their tails to the wind, and pendant ears, looking very wretched. Luckily I found a few books,—such as “A Dialogue of Devils,” “The Life of Marion,” “The Life of Washington,” “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” “The United States’ Reader,” & Conwell, and killed some of the time by turning over their leaves.

The rain lasted till the 12th January. The various streams had become cataracts and rivers, so we were obliged to remain at home two days longer. Meantime our store of meat had fallen very low, and there appeared little hope of being able to use that which we had left hanging in the forest. However we hastened away to save the skins, if there was yet time. The streams were still so swelled that we could only pass them on horseback. We reached our last camp about noon, and found, as we had expected, that the meat was tainted, and the greater part of it devoured by vultures. We stretched the skins, in the hope that the wind, with the help of a faint sun, which was peering bashfully through the clouds, might dry them.

As it grew late, and we had no other provisions than bread and salt, we set off with the dogs to look for turkeys, and came upon a gang just as they were making themselves comfortable for the night. We killed two, and might have shot more, but did not wish to increase the quantity of decaying meat in the neighborhood. On this account we removed our camp about half a mile off, stretched our blankets to keep off a light drizzling rain, hobbled the horses, and fed them with maize. The wolves made a dreadful noise all night at our old quarters. In the morning the rain held up, and the clouds separated a little; so I set off to try and steal a march on

them, and spoil their howling. The leaves were wet, and going round to gain the wind, I crept for about two hundred yards on my knees up to a large tree, and counted eight of them. Although they were to windward of me, one of them raised his head and began snuffing the air, then turned sharp round, and they all made off with their peculiar long gallop for the bush. Now was my time or never; I aimed at one of the largest, which covered another with its body. When the smoke cleared away, not a wolf was to be seen; they had vanished like magic—but following up the trail, I found one dead, and signs of another being wounded; but I found nothing more of the latter,—he was probably torn to pieces by his comrades. I scalped my prize, and returned to the camp; the scalp is valued, as before stated, at three dollars.

Meantime Conwell had employed himself in roasting turkeys, and we made an excellent breakfast. We then started off again. When I came to the place where I had hung up the buck, whose capture nearly cost me my neck, I found that the wolves had succeeded in dragging it down, and eaten nearly all but the bones. I knocked over another, and also killed a wild cat; returning to camp in the afternoon, where Conwell had arrived before me. He had killed a couple of deer, and we decided on bringing them to the camp, as there were so many wolves about.

## Chapter VII

### RETURN TO THE MULBERRY

Finding no traces of bears, we determined to leave the Richland and try the Mulberry again; so next morning we loaded our horses, and set off on our return. As we were descending a hill, Conwell stopped suddenly at the foot of a large oak, and after examining the bark attentively, he said that a bear was either in the tree, or had very lately left it. The weather had improved, and it was again rather cold. We had nothing better than our tomahawks for cutting down the tree, and they were not very sharp; a few strokes proved the fact. Luckily for us it was hollow, and we set-to with a will.

After hacking at it for three hours, the tree began to crack. We seized our rifles, called the dogs, and hastened towards the direction in which the tree must fall, to be ready to receive him. A couple of small splinters broke first; then a larger one; then the top began to bend slowly down the hill; then with a loud crash, and smashing its branches in the fall, the tree measured its length on the ground. No bear appeared; the nest was empty, though there could be no doubt it had lately been tenanted, for the sides were beautifully smooth and clean. There was a bough about five feet below the hole, where the bear went in and out, on which an Indian must formerly have stood, and tried to make an opening with his tomahawk, but without success; probably the bear, disturbed by the blows, had made his way out in time. Judging by the bark, this must have occurred about four or five years ago.

While we were looking at it, Conwell asked what the dogs were about; they appeared to be very eagerly licking up something from the ground, and we found that, accidentally, we had cut down a tree with honey in it. The bees were all torpid with the

cold, and the dogs were enjoying the honey, which the breaking boughs had brought to light. Our plans were soon arranged; Conwell went to look for a deer; I took my tomahawk to cut a trough, and was soon busy about the upper part of the trunk, which was sound enough. As it was freezing, and the honey would not run, there was no occasion to make the trough very deep; so it was soon finished, and I loaded it with great lumps of the frozen delicacy. This done, I collected wood and made a fire, expecting we should pass the night here; but just then I heard the report of Conwell's gun quite near, followed by his hail: I answered, and was soon by his side. He had killed a large fat doe, which we hung up by the hind legs, made a cut above the haunch, and drew off the skin without another touch of the knife, except at the knees, hocks, and head; stopping the holes, we turned it with the hair outwards, and so made a bag to carry the honey. When it was all in, I mounted, Conwell handed it to me, and away we went homewards, leaving the greater part of the last deer behind.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PERILOUS BEAR HUNT.

We had no trifle to carry, and were very glad to reach home; but our feet were hardly out of the stirrups when we heard that some Indians had looked in. They had discovered a cave which certainly contained a bear, but the Cherokees, who had first found it, had not ventured to penetrate far, as it was deep and narrow. This was grist to our mill. The skins and meat were stowed away, the rifles discharged and cleaned, horses fed, and all prepared for a regular hunt. We passed the evening in telling stories about bears; among others Conwell related the following anecdote respecting their winter sleep: "In this southern climate, the bear generally lays up about Christmas, or the beginning of the year, and remains till the end of February; if the weather is then mild he comes out occasionally, and sometimes he does not return to his winter-quarters, but prepares a new lair by biting down branches, and making a bed for himself in the most secluded and thickest jungle, as far removed as possible from the haunts of man. If they go into a cave, they do not take any provisions with them, but keep sucking their paws, whining all the time; when they become torpid, they lie with their head doubled under them, and their fore-paws above it. I myself have crawled into a cave, and poked bears with the end of my rifle, to make them raise their heads, so that I might conveniently fire into their brains; and the bears were always cowardly in a cave, except they had young, when they fight furiously--but even then, only when they have no other choice. When the weather is warm and they come out to drink, it is extraordinary how exactly they always step in the same place; but as the marks are thereby made so much deeper, these 'stepping paths,' as they are called, are easily discovered."

The night was bitter cold; the day broke as fine as a sportsman could wish. One of Conwell's married sons, who lived in the neighborhood, joined our party, and another young man named Smith, and as we rode by the school, the master dismissed all the boys and girls, as the temptation to accompany us was too strong to be resisted. We took plenty of fir splinters for torches, and our guide was young Smith, who was one of the party who had tracked the bear, but not ventured very far into the cave.

We reached the entrance about two o'clock in the afternoon, and prepared a good dinner to strengthen us for the exertions in prospect. While the meat was roasting, I took a survey of the outside, which presented a wall of limestone rock, about thirty feet high, and about 300 feet long, with four openings. After having well fortified the inner man, we prepared to enter the cave. We took only one rifle with us, but each had his large hunting-knife, and I buckled my powder-horn close to my side; then with my rifle in my right hand, and a torch of at least twenty inches in my left, we entered a dark passage about four feet high and two feet wide; young Conwell came next to me with another torch, followed by his father with a bundle of splinters to replace the torches as they burnt out. For about eighty yards it was all hard rock, and we advanced easily enough. But now came a sudden turn to the right, and the cave was so low that we were obliged to crawl on our hands and knees; the bottom was stiff clay, with numerous marks of bears, some quite fresh. As we advanced the passage became still smaller, and we were obliged to crawl on our stomachs. Thus far the Indians had penetrated, as we found by splinters of fir, and marks of their elbows and knees in the clay. The passage was now so small that I was obliged to lie quite flat, and push myself along by my feet assisted by my left elbow, holding the torch in my left hand, and the rifle in front with the right. The aperture was quite round, and rubbed smooth by the

passing in and out of wild animals, who may perhaps have made this their winter-quarters for hundreds of years. Here and there we found stalactites, which were a great hindrance, and we often had considerable difficulty in pushing ourselves through.

Apparently, we were the first whites, indeed the first men, who had ever ventured into the place, for the ground retained every impression that had been made in it. In some places the marks of the bears were petrified, having perhaps been left centuries ago. Once the thought occurred to me: should we ever get out again, or perish here from hunger? I went on however, all my senses on the stretch, to discover the sleeping bear.

We disturbed immense numbers of bats with our torches, and found also several crickets and a few bluebottle flies. When my torch was nearly burnt out, I stopped for a supply from young Conwell; the moment I remained quite still, I thought I heard a low whining not far off; and listening attentively, I distinctly heard the sound bear cubs make in sucking, and a low deep growling; so there was no longer any doubt but that we were near a she-bear with cubs.

The place where I had stopped was rather more roomy, so that I could sit up, and I turned to the two Conwells and asked if they heard the sound, which they answered with a whispered "Yes;"--and we held a short council as to further proceedings. In the first place, the cave was smaller further on--secondly we had only expected a sleeping bear, instead of a she-bear awake and with cubs, for which it was rather early in the season; though Conwell told me afterwards, that in Arkansas he had occasionally met with bear cubs as early as January. Whoever has seen a she-bear defend her young, with ears laid back and open jaws, may form some idea of our feelings. We were all bear-killers, and knew well enough the danger we were encountering in a space almost too narrow to admit of any movement. But at all events there we were, and there

was the bear--and no one even hinted at a retreat.

I examined my rifle closely to see that all was right, and as we slowly worked our way forwards, the elder Conwell warned me to make sure of my shot, adding dryly, by way of comfort, that it would be all the better for me; for if I missed I should be the first to suffer from the animal's fury.

We came nearer and nearer to the growling bear, who certainly must long since have heard us, and was now listening with all her might. At length the mingled whining and growling appeared to be quite close, and holding the torch behind my head, I plainly saw fiery eyeballs. I now halted, cleared the sight of the rifle, which had got clogged with the clay, refreshed my torch, and crept as silently as possible towards the dark mass.

The decisive moment was come; and as I could now distinguish the animal's head, through the surrounding darkness, I put myself in an attitude to take aim. The bear had risen on her hind-legs, and sat with their usual swinging motion; as I was trying to fix one of her eyes with the rifle, she suddenly disappeared through the almost palpable darkness.

Following her up, we came upon three cubs, nice little things, which roared lustily when for the first time they saw a light. These sounds were by no means agreeable to us, for we had reason to fear that the cries of the cubs might still more enrage the dam. We wished to save them alive, and asked old Conwell to stay with them and quiet them and to make a fire, while we went after the old one. Conwell sat down, and soon quieted them by giving them a finger to suck.

About ten feet from the lair the cave divided into two passages of equal size. The fresh marks showed that the bear had taken the one to the right. Presently the cubs began to cry again with renewed force, which rather alarmed us, for we should have been in an awkward predicament if the bear had endeavored to hasten



to their help, and found the way blocked up by our bodies; for, with the best will in the world, she could neither pass over us nor by our sides, and there was no other way left than to kill us, and eat her way through. While we were consulting together about this matter, in a low voice, the cry suddenly ceased, and we pushed on silently in better spirits; for, from all that we had seen, this bear was rather more cowardly than usual.

We went on and on, to the great annoyance of our ribs and elbows, and there seemed to be no end to the cave. There was a peculiarity about it, which I never found in any other, namely, several flat stones about one and two inches thick, which rang like steel when slightly struck with the finger. One place was very remarkable. It was about fifty or sixty feet long, with similar flat stones on each side, approaching to within six inches of each other in the middle, so that one could have passed through in a sitting posture, with the neck in the narrow part, and the head in the upper compartment; but to say the least, this would have been a rather inconvenient position for receiving the attack of an enraged bear.

After clearing this double passage, we arrived at a spring, which had worn itself a channel of about eighteen inches deep, and eight or nine wide. After working our way through another difficult pass, as I was in the act of drawing a long breath, I heard a deep growl very near me. Although I had been listening for this sound every foot of the way for several hours, yet, on hearing it so suddenly and so close, I was rather startled, and nearly let fall the torch; but quickly recovering, and raising the torch as high as possible, to the discomfort and horror of several innocent bats, I could make out Mrs. Bruin, about ten yards off, sitting upright, gnashing her teeth, digging into the ground with her sharp claws, and apparently in the worst possible humor.

Young Conwell, who was close behind me, laid his hand lightly

on my foot, and whispered that he heard the bear. As I had obtained this intelligence for myself, I whispered to him to be quiet, and creeping forward a couple of paces, I came to a place from whence I thought I could fire with effect. I placed my right foot in the channel of the stream, raised myself as well as I could on my left knee, and brought up the rifle. Young Conwell, who was anxiously watching all my motions, whispered me for God's sake to aim carefully, for if I made a bad shot we were both done for. Although I was nearer the danger than he was, I would not have changed places with him, as he could not see what was going on, and must naturally fear the worst; and in such cases, it is preferable to be in the post of danger, than to remain in a state of suspense.

The bear, by no means pleased with our intrusion, laid back her ears, snapped her teeth, and kept constantly swinging to and fro; as she did not sit quite upright I had no other choice than to aim at the head, in the hope that if I missed my aim, the ball might pierce the breast. As I was taking aim, the thought crossed my brain for a moment (why should I deny it?) how helpless I was if the shot failed; but it lasted only a moment, and, in the excitement of the present, I forgot both past and future.

I took a long aim, and yet, as the bear was not still for one second I pulled the trigger too soon. The cave was filled with thick smoke; a fearful groan announced that the beast was wounded; we did not wait to examine the state of affairs, but crept back as fast as the narrow space would allow, to a spot where there was more room to move, in order to reload, and return to the attack.

We had retreated, backwards, for about a hundred yards, and had halted in a more convenient part of the cave, when we heard the bear coming towards us, snorting and snapping her teeth, till the cave echoed with the sound. My first thought was "Good-by to



the light of the sun." But I had not much time for consideration, and called to young Conwell to make haste if he valued our lives, for the old one was coming. He did not require much pressing, and I never saw crabs crawl backwards quicker than we tried to do; yet, however great our hurry, and imminent our danger, it was very slow work, and the snorting came nearer and nearer.

I had dropped my rifle, as it very much hindered my retreat, and keeping a sharp look-out in front, where I constantly expected to see the bear, I suddenly discovered the glowing eyes only a few paces off. Just at this moment, my left elbow struck against a projecting bit of rock; the torch fell out of my hand, and all was dark as pitch; for although young Conwell had a second torch, my body filled up the space so completely that not a ray of light could pass. I took up the glimmering splinter, and threw it at the bear, which checked her, but only for a moment. Suddenly young Conwell stopped, and said he could not find the passage; and making a slip with his right hand, which held the torch, he dropped it in the water. I could not answer for the bear, who had followed us slowly, as if she knew that we were doing our best to get out of her way; she must have been so near, that I felt sure that if I stretched out my arm to its full extent I should touch her; for I could feel her hot breath on my face. With my left arm a little in advance, the right with the hunting-knife drawn back, I awaited, with every stroke of the pulse, the beast's attack, thinking of nothing else than selling my life as dearly as possible; for I had no hopes of getting out alive.

Meantime, young Conwell had not been idle. Aware that we could do nothing without a light, he had felt for his tinder-box, and the noise of his flint and steel was the only sound that broke a silence like that of the grave; for at the first blow the bear had ceased growling to listen to the strange sounds.

After a painful and anxious pause, he called out, "I have got a

light, give me the powder-horn and a rag." I cut away the first from its sling, then tore off a piece of my hunting-shirt, and passed them behind me. In a few minutes he recovered his splinter; this gave us, or rather me, new hopes; for he had no fear—firstly, because he could not know how near the bear was; and, secondly, because, as he assured me afterwards, he was so intent on striking a light, that he could think of nothing else. He had also succeeded in turning himself round, and his voice sounded to me like an angel's song when he called out that he had found the passage. He had now the advantage of creeping forwards, while I was still obliged to show front to the bear; but he gave me a few more splinters of fir, and a light, and we again began our slow retreat towards the entrance.

As I held the torch forwards, the bear gave a deep growl, gnashed her teeth, and retreated a pace or two, but followed again as soon as she saw that I was retiring. Necessity sharpens invention; I laid a couple of burning sticks crosswise on the ground, and saw, to my inexpressible delight, that she did not venture to pass them. Shuffling back as fast as I could, I heard Jim (young Conwell) call out to his father to go back, as the bear was coming. No other words were spoken, and indeed the growling came nearer; the fire had probably gone out on the moist ground, and then she followed us again.

I now crawled over the place where we had first discovered her, and found out the reason why the cubs had so suddenly ceased their cry. When we stopped, uncertain what to do, old Conwell had dashed their heads against the rock, and thus most likely saved our lives; for a cry from the cubs when our torches had gone out, would have enraged the wounded animal so much, that she would certainly have attacked us, and we should have been either killed, or so dreadfully crippled that we must have perished miserably in the cave.

At about a hundred paces from the lair, I stopped to listen again, but could hear nothing. I now called to the others to wait for me, and when we came to a more roomy place, which had also been the retreat of a bear, we held a consultation. Old Conwell thought that the bear had lain down by her dead cubs, and that one of us had better return to the mouth of the cave and fetch another rifle, as it was out of the question trying to pass the furious animal to get at mine. However, before attempting the long and difficult way back to the entrance, I resolved to creep again to the lair and see if she was not dead, for I could not but think that my ball must have had some effect. When I got there I could see nothing of her. My shout brought the others to the spot; so, advancing a little, and examining closely, we saw thick dark blood, and found that, instead of returning to her lair, she had taken the left-hand passage. I instantly proceeded to regain my rifle, which I found, covered with blood and slime, about three hundred yards off. I returned as fast as I possibly could, cleaned it, and reloaded, when we all started again for a fresh attack.

The left-hand passage was as bad as the right; but luckily the bear had not gone far. We soon reached the place, where, grinding her teeth, she awaited our approach. I halted about eight or nine feet from her, raised myself as high as the space would allow, laid the rifle over my left arm, in which I held the torch, and, seizing the time when her head was quiet for an instant, I fired. Again the cave echoed the crack of the rifle, and all was enveloped in thick smoke. I heard the bear groan and move, but stood my ground, as this time I knew that my ball had struck the right place: as the smoke cleared away, she lay dead before me.

Young Conwell and I were half dead from our exertions, and it would have been impossible for us to get the bear out:--for the time we had been crawling in the close air of the cave and smoke of the torches, and the long-continued excitement of constant

danger, were almost too much for the constitution of any man; so we decided on returning to the fresh air as fast as we could. It took us about half an hour to do so, and I shall never forget the effect of the delightfully cool night air, as I drew it in in long inspirations, and gazed on the bright-blue starry skies.

Young Smith and the schoolmaster were fast asleep, but as the dogs barked they both jumped up, and almost fell down again from fright, for they swore that they had never seen such horrible figures as we looked in the red light of the torches, covered with blood and slime, and blackened with smoke. Judging by the stars, it must have been about two o'clock in the morning. Although as hungry as lions, we were too exhausted to touch any thing; so we lay down and slept till daybreak. We made a good breakfast, and then, leaving old Conwell behind, who had done rather too much for his time of life, we four again entered the cave to bring out our prizes. We fastened a cord round the old bear's neck; I squeezed past, and shoved from behind, while Smith and the schoolmaster pulled, and young Jim Conwell held the light. We gained ground inch by inch, and about noon, amid a general hurrah, we cast down the carcass by the camp fire, where it was instantly taken possession of by Bears grease, who laid himself growling by its side.

As we had some way to go home, we only opened and cleaned her, and broke the spine, so that the carcass might lay better across a horse. We reached home by the evening; I took a plunge in the river, and then settled down to sleep.

We rose refreshed the next morning ready for further efforts, and concluded to try some caves that old Conwell knew of. We provided ourselves with cords and food, and made two large wax candles, which are less disagreeable in a close cave than pine torches, give a better light, and are not so liable to go out. We arrived at the place in the afternoon, and found eight or nine

caves, from forty to eighty feet deep, but all empty. We now separated to try different paths, and agreed that as soon as any one found a trail, he was to make a signal so that all might join in the chase.

## Chapter IX

### ERSKINE JOINS THE HUNT.

I found a small cave with fresh marks, but no bear. On returning to the mouth, I heard the dogs, and listening attentively for a minute or two, I felt sure they were coming towards me. Presently the noise of rushing through breaking branches was very distinct, and at last a bear broke cover. Throwing himself without hesitation down a precipice of about ten feet, he came towards me as fast as his legs would carry him. I stood still to see how near he would come. At about fifty paces distance he winded me, stopped short in his career, snuffed the air for an instant, and then made off in a different direction. I seized the opportunity offered, and sent him a ball; but I was not quite cool enough, and only wounded him in the hip. Meantime, the dogs having been stopped by the bluff which Bruin had so unceremoniously disposed of, he gained a good space in advance; but the wound checked his speed, and I could soon distinguish by the dogs' bark that they had come up with him again, but were keeping out of reach of his paws. A young man named Erskine, who was shooting near us, attracted by the report of my gun and the barking of the dogs, came up and gave the mortal wound. The two Conwells joined soon after, and we broke him up together.

Erskine told us that he had found a cave, which he was sure contained a bear, and asked one of us to go with him and try it, as he had neither torches nor wax candles. I was ready at once, took one of the candles, and explaining to the others where they might find us, we set off, and reached the place about sunset. We first made a large fire before the entrance of the cave, and then crept into it, Erskine preceding. Further on, the passage grew larger, so that we could walk upright, side by side. After going some

distance, we heard the regular low whine of the bear, who was sucking his paws, and Erskine, also a regular bear-hunter, asserted that he was fast asleep. Passing a sharp turn in the cave, we discovered him at our feet, and, as my comrade had stated, fast asleep, his head between his paws, uttering a low monotonous whine. Erskine set the muzzle of the rifle to the back of his head, and fired; he gave a convulsive start, and lay dead. I probed the wound with my fore finger to see how far the ball had penetrated; the rifle threw a ball of twenty-two to the pound; the skull was completely shattered.

We now decided on getting out of the cave for a little repose and refreshment, and to await the Conwells. We found them sitting by the fire, and young Conwell offered at once to take the cord and fasten it round the bear's neck, and try and pull him out alone. Lighting one of the candles, he soon disappeared in the cave. They had examined several other caves, but had not found any more signs. Extraordinary to relate, we had not seen a single deer during the course of our hunt; the forest seemed deserted, excepting by a bear or two in the caves, and a very few turkeys.

We had rested and talked for about half an hour, when young Conwell reappeared without the bear, having found it too heavy, and requiring help. We went, one and all, taking fresh torches with us, to the scene of action, and dragged him out, though with considerable difficulty, as many parts of the route were ill adapted for the transport of such a mass of flesh. Lying down by the fire, we slept comfortably till late next morning. It was near noon ere we could tear ourselves away from our couches of soft leaves, but as we all agreed that we must move sooner or later, we got up, loaded the horses with our prizes, and moved off towards Conwell's dwelling in as direct a line as the nature of the country would allow. We kept no look-out for game on our way home, having meat enough, and being almost tired to death.

We received a hearty welcome from Conwell's family, and we resolved to enjoy a little repose after all our hard work. In spite of the bears and bats that I encountered in my dreams, I awoke quite refreshed, and did full justice to the beautiful breakfast of bear-collops, milk, and maize bread. Perhaps the wild outdoor life which we had been leading may have lent more charms to the quiet life of this happy home, than under other circumstances I should have been sensible of; but, be that as it may, I shall never forget this amiable family. Old Conwell and I sat the whole day by the fireside, mending our leggings and moccasins. He was certainly the last man in the world to neglect spinning a yarn when he had a good opportunity, and he told me so many anecdotes, and related so many adventures, that the day passed away only too soon.

## Chapter X

### DEBATING SOCIETY AND RICHLAND CREEK

About an hour before sunset, a neighbor came in to inquire whether we would go with him to the debates. "Debates!" I asked, quite astonished, "what does that mean?" He seemed still more astonished at my ignorance, and explained that, on every Friday, it was the custom to hold a meeting at the school-house, about two miles off, to debate on any subject which might be proposed, and in which the scholars took part. The account excited my curiosity still more, and I decided on no account to miss such an opportunity. Old Conwell had frequented these meetings too often to be induced to leave his comfortable fireside; but I saddled a horse at once, and was soon at the school.

Imagine a large smoky building in the midst of a forest, with dark, dusty windows; a broad, well-worn door-stone; a heavy iron-bound door; and rules and regulations pasted up here and there in the room. A number of horses, fastened to the surrounding trees, showed that several of the debaters were already assembled. A bright fire burned in the chimney, the room was nearly full, and almost everybody was talking. At length order was established, and the company proceeded to the business of the evening. Two judges and two leaders were selected. The judges took their places in the center, while the leaders stationed themselves on opposite sides, each taking it in turns to choose a follower from the persons present. The question to be decided was this: "In a thickly inhabited district, where much cattle was reared, there was only one parish bull. The district was on the bank of a broad river, and the inhabitants were obliged to cross it very often, as all the mills and tanneries were on the other side--but there was only one ferry-boat, passed to and fro by a single

rope. The bull got down to the ferry, and on board the boat, and gnawed the rope in two; the boat floated down the river with the bull, and boat and bull were never seen again." These were the facts, now comes the question, "Who is to pay the damage for the loss? The owner of the boat for carrying off the bull, or the owner of the bull, because, from some malicious though undiscovered intention, he stole the boat?"

It was highly amusing to see one after another stand up, and seriously defend the cause of the bull, or the boat; others again talked all sorts of nonsense for a quarter of an hour, and then sat down with the remark that it was unnecessary to say more, as the case was so clear that the judges could not do otherwise than give a decision in their favor. After all had been heard, myself included, the judges consulted together, and the owner of the bull was condemned to pay the expenses. The next question was: "Which is better, a single or a married life?" The judges were not quite impartially chosen. The wife of one had run off with a young man to Texas, three years ago; the wife of the other had three times borne twins. I was chosen on the married side with the schoolmaster, three or four other young men, and six or seven of the scholars. We defended our cause with glowing animation--but one judge thought of Texas, and the other of the twins, and our scale kicked the beam. Several other questions were discussed; among them, "Which is worse, a smoky chimney or a scolding wife?" Left undecided. At last I was invited to propose a subject, but I would not consent until I received assurance that it should be discussed: "Which enjoys life most, has fewer cares, and lighter sorrows--a short or a long-tailed dog?" But by this time it was late, and time to adjourn; so the house was soon left to its solitude in the forest, and the party dispersed in all directions to their dwellings.

## Chapter XI

### HUNTING RICHLAND CREEK

On the morning of the 22nd January, Old Conwell and I shouldered our rifles, and each provided with meat and bread, we wandered towards the waters of the Richland. Lucky was it that we took provisions, for not a shot did we fire. Next day was almost as bad, and if Conwell had not knocked over a turkey, we should have been reduced to chew sassafras. At length on the third day, he shot a deer and I a turkey, which put a little life into the dogs. Disgusted with our bad luck, we decided on returning home next day; besides, the weather was bad, and threatened to be worse. To our inexpressible joy, snow fell during the night, and all thoughts of return vanished. We took different directions, with the agreement to return to camp in the evening. I had not gone far when I saw footsteps of a young buck in the four-inch deep snow, followed him up and shot him. I heard the report of Conwell's rifle about the same time. Hanging up the deer, I walked on. After lounging along slowly for above an hour, without seeing any thing, I came across the track of Conwell, who, with his dog, had been following up the bloody trail of a panther; I gathered from the signs that he had broken his left hind leg. I followed it up on the instant, as fast as my legs could carry me; in rather more than an hour I arrived at the mouth of a cave, where Conwell was awaiting me, knowing that I should cross his trail, and follow it up as soon as I saw the marks of the panther.

The wounded brute had taken refuge in the cave, leaving us to act as we pleased, probably thinking himself quite safe. We held a short consultation;--Conwell said, that he had hidden a bundle of kindlers in a hole, and that if I would keep watch here, he would go and fetch them. I consented, of course, and laid myself down

before the cave, with bare knife and cocked rifle. Lying in the snow, however, was any thing but agreeable; at first, when I was warm with running, I thought nothing of it, but by degrees I became colder and colder, till my teeth chattered. I could not venture to lay aside the rifle to make a fire, for fear the panther should escape. I managed to keep up a little warmth by running and jumping, but was very glad when my old friend returned and made a good fire.

As soon as we were well warmed, we made torches, and entered the cave as cautiously as possible, each with a burning torch in his left hand, and a rifle in the right. I went first, but the cave was soon roomy enough to admit of our walking upright beside each other. Some distance in, it took a turn to the left, and about two hundred paces in advance we saw the fiery eyeballs of the beast, who kept shutting them from time to time. Conwell, taking my torch, stepped behind me, while I took aim and fired. We heard a noise after the shot, but could not make out the result; I reloaded as fast as possible, while Conwell went in advance, but we could see nothing more of the animal's eyes. We went on with cocked rifles on our left arm. Moving silently and cautiously forward, we suddenly discovered the panther in a little hollow close to our feet, a beautiful but alarming sight, his ears laid back, his teeth gnashing in wild rage, and his glowing eyes so wide open, that they seemed half out of their sockets. Inspired by one impulse, we both fired so exactly together, that neither knew that the other had done so. Our enemy was hit, but whether mortally or not was more than we could tell. Dropping our rifles like lightning, we drew our knives; a sore need we had of them, for before the sound of the rifles expired, we felt the weight of the panther upon us. I drove my knife into him, and sprang back; our torches were extinguished; it all passed so quickly, that I did not recover full possession of my senses, till I stood beside my old friend in the

fresh air at the mouth of the cave. I only remember that, in the impenetrable darkness and thick smoke, I did not know which way to turn, and that Conwell dragged me out. When we came into the light of day, we found ourselves covered with sweat and blood, and our clothes all torn.

Conwell complained of pain in the breast. Tearing open his shirt, we found two deep gashes from the left shoulder to the pit of the stomach; I had escaped with only a few scratches. We had neither of us felt when we were wounded, but before we troubled ourselves about it, we made a fire in the mouth of the cave to prevent the panther from coming out; then washed and bound up our wounds, and sat by the fire to consider what was next to be done. There was the panther in the cave, whether alive or dead we knew not. At any rate, he was badly wounded, for both our knives, with blades nine inches long, were bloody to the hilt. But indeed we had no choice; our rifles, and Conwell's ball-pouch, which the brute had torn away, were still in the cave.

It might perhaps have been possible to suffocate the panther with smoke, but there might have been another opening, and then we should have had our trouble for nothing. We soon made up our minds, and entered the cave again with fresh torches and bare knives, but not without beating hearts. We moved silently and cautiously on, holding the torches well before us, so as not to be so agreeably surprised a second time. We recovered our rifles without seeing the enemy. I held both the torches while Conwell loaded his rifle, then gave them to him while I loaded mine; and having our faithful weapons once more in our hands, we stepped forward again still slowly and silently, but with lighter hearts. "There!" suddenly called out Conwell, holding his torch aloft, and staring before him; it was the first word spoken since we re-entered the cave. The panther lay stretched on the ground; no longer dangerous, for the last convulsions were over. We skinned

him and cut him up; all the balls had taken effect, and both our knives had pierced his body, so that it was only in his death-struggle that he sprang upon us. We took the skin, although it almost looked like a sieve, and returned to our fire.

It was night by the time we came out of the cave, and, with hungry stomachs, lay all four by the fire; for neither we nor the dogs had any fancy to eat the panther. Conwell suffered very much from his wound, but towards morning he fell into a tolerably quiet sleep. We moved off with the first gleam of day to the place where I had hung up the buck, breakfasted there, and started for fresh game.

Meantime it had become warmer. The snow had disappeared, but all the game seemed to have gone on their travels; for although we saw signs enough, not a shot could we get. In the night we were awakened by a thin cold rain, and having no mind to get wet through, we jumped up, cut poles with our heavy knives, and spreading my blanket, which was the largest, over them, and laying ourselves on the other, underneath it, after making up the fire afresh, that the rain might not put it out, we were soon fast asleep.

Next morning brought fresh troubles, but no reward. Dispirited, we wandered the whole day through the wet forest, without seeing a turkey. The meat we had brought with us was getting low, as we had not been very saving of it, and had given the larger share to the dogs; after breakfast there was one small piece left for each to share with his dog at night; still hoping, we walked on cautiously and attentively till late at night, without seeing even so much as a vulture.

On the morning of the 29th of January, we sat by the fire with empty stomachs, and stared sorrowfully at the crackling flames. At length Conwell burst out with a loud laugh, and asked whether we were forced to remain in this deserted spot, and why we



should not go home. But I would not give it up yet; to go home with nothing but a panther's skin full of holes was too bad, and I begged for one more day; at any rate, if we found nothing before twelve o'clock, we could then meet at the camp and return home. In silence, and on the watch for the merest trifles, I wandered with Bears-grease through all the places where hitherto I had almost always found game, without meeting a sign; and my hunger was quite painful. How I thought of shooting parties at home, where one was sure of finding some sort of a house every half hour; here, was only thick forest, where one wet dripping tree looked exactly like another. And yet it was not without its charms. For instance, every now and then you were entangled by the thorns of the black locust, or if your slippery moccasins caused you to fall, you might be sure of finding some of them conveniently placed to receive you.

I returned to the camp about noon, exhausted and dispirited, and found my old comrade stretched quietly by the fire. He said he had been waiting for me about a couple of hours; that it was very clear there was no game to shoot; and I was now of the same opinion. Heartily sick of the useless fatigue, we shouldered the skin and our blankets, and left the place with heavy hearts and weary limbs.

It was long after dark when we arrived at Conwell's home, and received the usual kind welcome, and we were heartily laughed at, when, instead of bringing provisions, we fell, like famished wolves, upon every thing eatable that came in our way. A long draught of fresh milk did me, above every thing else, an immensity of good.

I would willingly have enjoyed a day's rest; but Conwell--who, in spite of his deep gashes, which were not yet healed, was as fresh and strong as ever after his first meal, and could not remain quiet under the circumstances--impressed on me the necessity of

trying again, otherwise people would believe that we had lost the power of shooting a deer. So we were off again before noon, gained the source of the Hurricane, rode across the "Devil's Stepping Path," a narrow rock with a precipice on each side, left the Pilot-rock on our left, and came towards evening into the pine forests, where we were sure of finding kindlers. Descending the steep side of a mountain, we observed a column of thin blue smoke by the side of a stream, showing that some hunters were encamped there. We went straight towards it, and found it to be an Indian camp, and our former acquaintance, young Erskine, among them. They were Cherokees with three young Choctaws, these two tribes being on good terms. Like ourselves, they were out bear-hunting, but had had better luck. A quantity of bear meat was hanging about the camp, and even the dogs could eat no more. Casting ourselves down by the fire, one of the squaws--for there were several women in the camp--immediately cooked some bear for us, with which we duly regaled ourselves.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE DEATH OF ERSKINE

Night came on, and soon all were sunk in deep repose. I was not inclined to sleep, and Bears grease, who had tired himself with chasing a gang of turkeys, which escaped at last by flying across a ravine, lay close to me, with his head on my left arm. Soon he began to dream, scrambling with his feet as if running, and barking in a low voice. Watching him brought to my mind a story which was told me by an old bear-killer, to the effect, that if a man lays his pocket-handkerchief over the head of a dreaming dog, letting it stay till the dream is out, then lays it under his own head, and falls asleep, he will have the same dream that the dog had. A pocket-handkerchief was a luxury I had dispensed with, but I laid my Scotch cap on my dog's head, under which he went on dreaming, and when he awoke I laid it under my own head, and was soon asleep. It was perhaps owing to the idea under which I fell asleep, although in general I can never dream what I wish, but, be that as it may, I soon found myself running desperately after turkeys, and never stopped, till I had chased them into a tree, when I stood looking up at them without thinking of shooting. Just then my dog gave a loud bark, and I jumped up. One of the Indians had risen to look to the fire, and Bears grease thought it rather suspicious. My beautiful dream was gone, and I could no longer recollect whether I barked or not. I fell asleep again, but the dream never returned.

Early in the morning we began to move, dividing into two parties, for the better chance of finding game. Conwell went with some of the Indians, among whom he had found an old acquaintance, to make a circuit round the Pilot-rock, while Erskine and I, with three Cherokees, proceeded to the sources of

the Frog bayou.

About ten o'clock we came to a cave, which seemed worth examining. We made torches, there being plenty of strips of pine lying about; it was settled that I should try my luck, with one of the Indians. Erskine remained with the two others by the fire, saying he had searched so many caves within the last four days without finding any thing, that he was tired of it. The entrance was rather small, but it became gradually larger, and we went a long way in. There were evidences of its having been tried before, as we found moccasin marks, and pieces of burnt wood. An unexpected sight suddenly arrested our progress,—the skeletons of a man and of a bear, lying peaceably within three feet of each other. A rifle thickly covered with rust, and a corroded knife, lay by the side of the first, and some glass beads convinced us that it was the skeleton of an Indian, who had bravely attacked the bear single-handed, and had fallen in the struggle, the skeleton of the bear proving that he had sold his life dearly.

The skeleton was perfect, except some of the small bones, which rats or snakes might have carried off. The Indian pointed in silence to the upper bone of the right arm, which was broken, and the knife was lying on the left side.

The sight of these remains of a human being, which may have lain there for years, while his footsteps were still so fresh in the moist earth, was deeply affecting. As I was about to pass on, the Indian laid his hand on my arm, and shook his head, saying, in broken English, "The spirit of the red man is in the cave, and Wachiga goes no further." Nothing could induce him to go on—all my persuasions were fruitless; pointing to the bones, he said, "The bones of the red man belonged to a great chief; the bear seeks no bed where the hunter sleeps." As this last remark seemed well founded, and as the sight had shaken me too much for me to go alone, we turned back without touching the remains.

We found Erskine alone, and told him what we had seen, but he did not seem at all inclined to visit the remains. We found three other caves, but no bear: Erskine and the Indians tried the two first, Erskine and I the last. The cave separated into two passages; Erskine took the right, I the left, and as I proceeded I found plenty of marks. The cave was so small that I was obliged to leave every thing but a torch and my knife; I could not even turn myself from one side to the other to change my attitude. I had taken off my hunting shirt, and had on nothing but a cotton shirt and leggings, and was working on, inch by inch, with tolerable certainty of finding a bear. The passage was quite round, and in many places as smooth as glass from being rubbed by wild beasts. In one place I found the skin of a rattle-snake.

At length I got so completely jammed in that I could neither move backwards nor forwards. The perspiration burst from every pore, and for a minute or two I lay motionless; then I again exerted all my efforts to force myself backwards, and, to my indescribable satisfaction, at length succeeded, leaving, however, the greater part of my shirt behind me; and my delight may be imagined when I again inhaled the fresh air. My hair stood on end at the fearful thought of sticking fast in such a hole, buried alive, and dying of hunger.

Night found us far from our camp, so we made one for ourselves where we were. Wachiga, who had become very pensive, sat smoking his tomahawk and staring at the fire. Notwithstanding that he had been converted to Christianity, he had still some remains of the old superstition. Erskine was in high good humor, and told one droll story after another.

On the next morning, February 1st, we had hardly started ere we heard the dogs. Wachiga declared instantly that they were his brother's, and disappeared behind the rocks without another word. As we stood listening, the sound seemed to take a different

direction; we ascended the mountain as fast as we could to cut off the chase, but found that we must have been mistaken, for in a few minutes all was silent as the grave; once we thought we heard a shot, but could not be certain. We ascended to the highest terrace and walked slowly on, looking out for fresh signs, and listening to catch the sound of the dogs; below, among the broken masses of rock, they might be near without being heard, while on the mountain tops they are audible at a great distance.

It may have been about two in the afternoon, and we had hitherto seen nothing, when Bears grease raised his nose in the air, remained for an instant or two in a fixed position, then giving a short smothered howl, dashed down the mountain side. Listening attentively, we heard the chase coming down the Hurricane river. Erskine called out triumphantly, "We shall have plenty of bear this evening," and dashed after the dog. I was soon by his side. I must observe, by the way, that we were both very hungry. Presently a bear broke through the bushes; a projecting rock stopped him for an instant, when Erskine saluted him with a ball: he received mine as he rushed past, and disappeared. The dogs, encouraged to greater efforts by our shots and the stronger scent, followed him out, Bears grease, who was quite fresh, leading the van. They soon came up with him, and stopped him. We rushed to the spot without waiting to reload, and arrived in time to see the beast, excited to the greatest fury, kill four of our best dogs with as many blows of his paws; but the others only threw themselves on him with the greater animosity, and if our rifles had been loaded we could not have used them. Just as a large powerful brown dog which had furiously attacked the bear was knocked over bleeding and howling, Erskine called out, "Oh, save the dogs," threw down his rifle, and rushed on with his knife among the furious group; I followed on the instant. When the bear saw us coming, he exerted still more force to beat off the dogs, and meet

us. Seizing his opportunity, my comrade ran his steel into his side. The bear turned on him like lightning, and seized him; he uttered a shrill piercing shriek. Driven to desperation by the sight, I plunged my knife three times into the monster's body with all my force, without thinking of jumping back; at the third thrust the bear turned upon me. Seeing his paw coming, I attempted to evade the blow, felt a sharp pang, and sunk senseless to the ground.

When I recovered my senses, Bears grease was licking the blood from my face. On attempting to rise, I felt a severe pain in my left side, and was unable to move my left arm. On making a fresh effort to rise, I succeeded in sitting up. The bear was close to me, and--less than three feet from him lay Erskine, stiff and cold. I sprang up with a cry of horror, and rushed towards him. It was too true; he was bathed in blood, his face torn to pieces, his right shoulder almost wrenched away from his body, and five of the best dogs ripped up and with broken limbs lying beside him. The bear was so covered with blood that his color was hardly discernible. My left arm appeared to be out of the socket, but I could feel that no bones were broken.

The sun had gone down, and I had hoped that the other hunters might have heard our shots and the barking and howling of the dogs. It grew dark. No one came. I roared and shouted like mad; no one heard me. I tried to light a fire, but my left arm was so swelled that I gave up the attempt. But as it would have been certain death to pass the night under these, circumstances without a fire, I tore away part of the back of my hunting shirt, the fore part being saturated with blood, sprinkled some powder on it, rubbed it well in, all with my right hand, shook a little powder into my rifle, and placing the muzzle on the rag, I fired, when it began to burn immediately. Blowing it up to a flame, I piled on dry leaves, twigs, & Conwell, and succeeded in making a good

fire, though with great pain and trouble. It was now dark. I went to my dead comrade, who was lying about five yards from the fire. He was already stiff, and it was with great difficulty that I could pull down his arms and lay him straight; nor could I keep his eyes closed, though I laid small stones on them.

The dogs were very hungry, but as it was impossible for me to break up the bear, I only ripped him up, and fed them with his entrails. Bears grease laid himself down by the corpse, looking steadfastly in its face, and went no more near the bear. In the hope of obtaining help, I loaded and fired twice, but nothing moved: the forest appeared one enormous grave.

I felt very ill, vomited several times, and my shoulder was excessively painful. Winding my blanket round me as well as I could, I laid myself down beside the fire, and lost all consciousness of my wretched situation; whether I slept or fainted is more than I can tell, but I know that I dreamed I was at home, in bed, and my mother brought me some tea and laid her hand on my breast; I heard the children in the street making a noise, and saw the snow on the roofs of the houses, and thought it must be very cold out of doors.

Such an awakening as I had was worse than I could wish to my bitterest enemy. Bears grease had pressed close to my side, laying his head on my breast; the fire was almost out, I was shivering with cold, and the wolves were howling fearfully around the dead, keeping at a distance for fear of the living, but by no means disposed to lose their prey. I rose with difficulty, and laid more wood on the fire. As it burnt up, the face of the corpse seemed to brighten. I started, but found it was only an optical delusion. Louder and fiercer howled the wolves, and the dogs, of whom five were alive besides Bears grease, answered them; but the answer was by no means one of defiance--rather a lament for the dead. Partly to scare away the wolves, partly in the hope of

finding help, I loaded and fired three times; my delight was inexpressible as I heard three shots in return. I loaded and fired till all my powder was expended. As morning broke, I heard two shots not far off, and soon after, a third. A shipwrecked mariner, hanging on to a single plank, could not raise his voice more lustily to hail a passing ship, than I did then--and, joy upon joy, I heard a human voice in answer. The bark of the dogs announced a stranger, and Wachiga advanced out of the bush. "Wah!" he exclaimed, starting at the shocking spectacle. He felt poor Erskine, and shook his head mournfully. He then turned to me. I showed him my swollen arm, which he examined attentively, without speaking. Forming a hollow with his two hands, and placing them to his lips, he gave a loud piercing shout. The answer came from no great distance, and in a few minutes my dear old Conwell, and most of the Indians, were at my side. I grasped Conwell's hand sorrowfully, and told him in few words how it had all happened. The old man scolded, and said it served us right; there was no great danger in sticking a knife into a bear's paunch, when he is falling, with the dogs upon him, but if he has been thrown, and then catches sight of his greatest enemy, man, he exerts all his force to attack him, and woe to him who comes within reach of his paws. It was all very well talking; he had not been present, and seen one dog after another knocked over never to rise again; five minutes more, and not one would have been saved, and who knows whether the enraged beast would not have attacked us, then.

Meantime, the Indians had been digging a grave with their tomahawks. Wrapping the body in a blanket, they laid him in it, and covered him with earth and heavy stones. Conwell cut down some young stems, and made a fence round the solitary grave. I could not avoid a shudder at the quiet coolness of the whole proceeding, as the thought struck me, that the same persons,

under the same circumstances, would have treated me in the same cool way, had I fallen instead of Erskine. Like me, he was a lonely stranger in a foreign land, having left England some years before, and his friends and relations will probably never know what has become of him. Thousands perish in this way in America, of whom nothing more is heard, and perhaps in a few months the remembrance of them has entirely passed away.

After the dead was quietly laid in the grave, Wachiga came with an elderly Indian to look at my arm. Wachiga moved it, while the other looked steadfastly in my face: the pain was enough to drive me mad, but I would not utter a sound. Next the old Indian took hold of my arm, laying his left hand on my shoulder, and while Wachiga suddenly seized me round the body from behind, the other pulled with all his force. The pain at first was so great that I almost fainted; but it gradually diminished; in spite of my resolve to show no signs of it, I could not suppress a shriek. Conwell soon after asked if I could ride. On my answering "yes," he helped me on a horse; then throwing the bear's skin and some of the meat on his own, we moved slowly homewards. My sufferings on the way were very great, but I uttered no murmur. I only longed for repose. At nightfall we had still four miles to go. He asked me if I could support the pain and fatigue, or if we should camp where we were, as there was plenty of wood and water. I would rather have ridden forty miles, let alone four, with the hope of rest at the end of them. We arrived in about an hour. I was so stiff that I could hardly get off the horse. On entering the room I threw myself on a bed, and had a violent fever during the night, and talked wildly--fortunately in German. Towards morning I began to feel better, had a quiet sleep, and woke up about noon much refreshed. Meantime, old Conwell had related all that had occurred, and they attended me like a son. It took two more days before I could move out of bed and was able to stand.

I was hardly so far recovered as to be able to crawl about, when Conwell proposed another hunt, and although I had suffered so much, I could not say "No." On the 6th February we rode out again, but there was no longer any life in the thing; we found the same Indians, hunted with them a few days, shot a few deer, some turkeys, and a young bear, returning on the 12th, Conwell with two deer-skins and some haunches, I with a turkey.

By this time my arm was quite healed. Nevertheless, I had made up my mind to leave the mountains and go southwards, partly from a returning fit of my old love of change, partly because I longed for news from home, not having received any letters for several months, and partly also because game had become so scarce through the number of hunters, that there was hardly enough to subsist on. We heard that a party of twelve men had been along the Richland and killed or driven away every thing, and that during the last three days not a turkey was to be seen. The news of game from other quarters was no better; in short there was nothing for it but off! off! When I was once more surrounded by my old friend's amiable family, and passed another evening among them, my resolution was indeed shaken; however, during the night I gave it mature consideration, and in the morning I told them that I should that day take my departure. Attempts were immediately made to dissuade me from it, and old Conwell asked in downright earnest if I could not stay with them always, and take the school. The present schoolmaster was ignorant and a drunkard, and they would have been glad to be rid of him. For a moment, indeed, but only for a moment, my fancy depicted the delights of a home among the mountains, then the image of my old village schoolmaster flashed across my mind, with his threadbare black coat, false collars, and shirt-front, and his frame as thin as a skeleton. I shook my head mournfully. He changed his plan, and proposed that I should take a farm. But that

I had also reflected on: I was too poor, and although the kind people would have done every thing in their power to help me, I should have been too dependent; for although much is not required to set up farming in America, still there must be something, and it does not look well for the beginner to be always borrowing horse or plow, axe, spade, saw--in short, every farming and household utensil, until at last the most patient man would be worn out, and everybody would be alarmed the moment they saw the borrower coming. I was once witness of such a beginning: a family that came to the forest without any means, were at first most liberally assisted by their neighbors; they helped them with their fences, in building their house, in clearing and plowing the land, and lent them every thing, even to flour and pork; but how could people who began thus ever become independent? It took years before they could procure the most necessary articles for themselves.

My old friend acknowledged the truth of the picture, and my journey was settled for the morrow.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SORROWFUL FAREWELL

My store of bears' fat and skins was not so large but that I could pack it on one horse, for the greater part of the skins, which had been exposed to the wet weather, were spoiled. The skins were made up into two bundles, one on each side of the horse, while a deer-skin sack, containing about eight gallons of bears' fat, lay across the pommel. One of Conwell's sons, who had his father's booty to dispose of, accompanied me, and thus on the following morning we set off for the little town of Ozark on the Arkansas.

I was very sorrowful on leaving this place, where the kind treatment of these good people had so completely gained my affections, and I was obliged to cut short my leave-taking to hide my emotions.

Another grief that weighed heavily on my heart was parting with my faithful dog. Intending to give up shooting, and to proceed to New Orleans, and uncertain under what circumstances I might arrive there, I would not willingly expose the noble creature, who promised to turn out remarkably well, to become a mere mud-scraper in the streets. Moreover, my old comrade had become attached to him, and requested to have him, while my fair friends promised to take good care of him. So they tied him up, and as I was about to ride off, and he found he was not to go with me, he looked so entreating and affectionate with his intelligent eyes, that I was obliged to turn away to hide my tears.

My companion exerted himself to chase away my mournful thoughts, telling all sorts of droll stories as we rode through the forest; and at length I made an attempt at least to appear cheerful.

In the afternoon we reached a tavern, which was also a store, not far from the town. Here we disposed of our goods, though to no

great advantage, and, according to the custom, as whiskey was not sold by the glass, we ordered a quart, and sat down in a corner to discuss a portion of it. We found here two other men, dressed as hunters, who were playing cards before the door, sitting on the trunk of a tree; a third leaning against the house, was fast asleep; his features seemed familiar to me, but I could not recollect where I had seen him, till one of the card-players caught my eye, and held out his hand, asking if I did not remember Bahren's wretched steel mill at which we had been grinding together. This recalled the whole scene to my memory, as well as the sleeper--I had left him sleeping, and he was still asleep.

As young Conwell had finished his business, and could not remain any longer, because he wished to stop at a house which stood some miles on his road home, we took a hearty leave of each other, when he mounted and soon disappeared in the forest, driving before him my horse and a pack-horse he had brought with him.

THE  
SILVER MINE  
IN THE  
OZARKS  
IN  
NORTH AMERICA



## CHAPTER XIV

### SPANISH TREASURE.

THE thunder rolled hoarsely and menacingly over the lofty summits of the Ozark Mountains, fiercely challenging its echo from the gloomy ravines and precipitous mountain slopes. The lightning gleamed wildly, giving the whole wild landscape, in the pale light of parting day, a peculiar and melancholy illumination. This is a mountain chain of North America, extending south-west, in a direction parallel with the Appalachians, from the Missouri, near the Osage, to the Red River. They belong neither to the Appalachians nor to the Rocky Mountains, but from their coincidence with the former in geological structure and direction, they are related to them in physical origin. and the rain fell in torrents on the thick leafage of the oaks and hickories, but was speedily sucked up by the thirsting earth before it could reach the deep-lying bed of the little Hurricane River, in 'which the water stood in isolated small pools. At the moment when the storm seemed to have reached its highest pitch, and peal on peal, redoubled by the echo, growled through the ravines, two hunters, wrapped in large white woolen blankets, which covered the whole figure nearly down to the fringed moccasins, clambered down the precipitous slopes which frown over the Hurricane from its source to the spot where it falls into the Mulberry, and did not stop till they found themselves on the lowest, terrace-shaped promontory, whence they could survey the rocky bed of the river. " Confound the storm !" the elder of them at length exclaimed as he stopped, and, after throwing back his blanket, examined the leather-covered lock of his rifle to see whether it was dry and in good condition ; " it howls to-day among the old trees as if it wanted to tear up the whole forest by the roots. I am heartily glad that we have reached the river, for my legs are almost giving way from the hurried march, and the sharp stones have torn my moccasins

and feet." " Then you know for certain," the younger, whose name was Thompson, asked his comrade, who was at least ten years older, "that you are on the right trail, and the Spaniards have gone this way?" " This morning, at daybreak, I saw their watch-fire below, at the little osier-bed, about a mile and a half from here, and heard the bells of their mules," Preston answered. " Then you know for certain," the younger, whose name was Thompson, asked his comrade, who was at least ten years older, "that you are on the right trail, and the Spaniards have gone this way?" " This morning, at daybreak, I saw their watch-fire below, at the little osier-bed, about a mile and a half from here, and heard the bells of their mules," Preston answered. "And how many men, do you think, were there?" the other asked, thoughtfully. " I have already told you," the elder replied, crossly, " that, as often as these strangers have been seen here, never more than two men went upwards from the mouth of the Hurricane, although eight or nine awaited the return of the two who preceded them at the mouth." " I cannot understand the affair at all," Thompson replied, with a shake of his head, " and I should like you to tell me all you know about it, once again ; for, as we are about to risk the adventure together, I should not like to be groping in the dark." " Good," his comrade replied ; " the rain has abated considerably ; so we will go down to the waterside and camp there ; the story will be much better told by a good fire and a properly broiled piece of venison ; and, to tell the truth, we shall require all our strength between this and to-morrow morning. It is beginning to grow quite dark down here, and we shall want the twilight to set the wet wood alight — so, on." With these words, and without awaiting a reply from his comrade, he walked down a narrow deer track that led to the stream, and soon stood by the stony bed of the Hurricane, at a spot where a basin of water, usually clear, but at this moment disturbed by the rain, is formed by a subterranean spring. The storm now yielded in intensity, the thunder resounded in the

distant north, and, in many places, the blue sky peeped out through the gray masses of cloud which, driven by a fresh south-east wind, moved athwart the valley in long strips. The two men, however, seemed to have little pleasure in the beautiful evening, but were busily engaged in kindling a fire, not merely as a protection against the by no means mild evening breeze, but to prepare for supper a few pieces of raw venison, which Preston took out of a freshly-stripped skin. Thompson now struck fire, and lighted a patch of linen, well rubbed with powder, while Preston brought some little dry splinters which he had cut out of a fallen, decayed tree; in a few moments a weak flame rose, aroused by their united blowing and fanning, which, being carefully and quickly fed with additional sticks, soon gave out a bright, glowing flame. The hunters now hung their blankets to dry, on poles which they fixed in the ground; collected several pieces of bark from the half-rotten trees that lay around them, which they laid on the ground to keep them from the wet; then placed their strips of venison on sharpened pieces of wood near the glowing ashes, and employed the time during which the meat was broiling, in drying and resting themselves a little. Both were dressed in simple, dark-blue hunting-shirts, made of coarse homespun, but the younger had a species of ornament on his consisting of narrow yellow fringe, which was attached to the collar, the sleeves, and all the seams. They wore leather leggings and moccasins, and in the belts which confined their shirts were broad long bear-knives. Preston's head was covered with an old, shabby beaver hat, while Thompson had a gaily-colored handkerchief bound tightly round his temples. Their long rifles, with bullet pouches hanging over them, they had leaned against a young tree, and now threw themselves, fatigued by the exertion they had undergone, upon the strips of bark near the fire, so that the steam rose from their damp clothes in clouds. "Now,

Preston," Thompson began, after he had taken one of the pieces of meat from the fire, cut off the part that was broiled, and returned the rest, "tell me your strange story once again; calculate the risk and possible gain, and then I will let you know if I will share it with you or not." "Let me know — share it or not V Preston asked in astonishment, as he raised himself on his elbow, and looked inquiringly at his younger comrade. "Have we come hither through storm and tempest, that you may now be in doubt what you will do or leave undone, and only, perhaps, wait for a less favorable description to return home quietly, and leave to me alone the discovery on which, as you are well aware, I have set my life V "Well, well," Thompson said, with a laugh, "be not so angry — out with it; you know I am usually the last to give up a thing on which I have made up my mind; come, tell me clearly and frankly what we have to hope, so that we may take our measures quickly and surely." "Spoken like a man," said the elder, as he fell back into his comfortable reclining position; "and now, then, learn all that I know of the mysterious conduct of the Spaniards, whom I have been following for years. But never has a fox made a greater fool of a hound, or more frequently led one from the scent, than these cursed Seniors have done, even though I have followed them with equal fidelity and willingness." You know that, for many years, the Cherokees have spoken of a silver mine, which is situated somewhere on the waters of the Hurricane, and is said to be extraordinarily productive, but no imaginable promises could induce one of them to describe the place more closely, as, according to their laws, death is the punishment of treachery, although the secret can no longer be of service to any of them. A few Spaniards, however, must be in possession of it, for, during many years (and for the last three, I have watched them myself), several dark forms, wrapped in long Mexican serape^, come with three or four mules to the mouth of

the Hurricane, when the greater portion camp in the almost impenetrable thicket whence the river derives its name, while two with the beasts mount the hill on the left bank of the river, cross the second terrace from the top and the ' flat mountain' opposite the little thicket which lies about a mile from here up the stream, return to the valley after leaving the mules hobbled in the thicket, and then look for the mine, which must be somewhere in this neighborhood, for, in twenty-four hours, they usually return with heavily-laden beasts to their company, and then disappear for twelve months. For three years I have been watching them, and followed their trail when they retreated, with indefatigable care, searched the precipices on both sides of the river from top to bottom, and left scarce a stone unturned, as if all the bears in Arkansas were looking for worms, and all in vain. From the osier-bed they had gone several hundred yards up the mountain, but had afterwards kept so entirely among the rocks, that every trace disappeared, and my eye, which is far from being one of the worst, could not follow their trail any further. For two years in succession I have been making these fruitless attempts, and to my shame I must confess that a fear my neighbors had impregnated me with caused me to refrain from insuring to my researches the proper success. They tell all sorts of horrible stories of these black Spaniards ; for instance, that they do not care about shedding human blood to preserve their secret, and once murdered a solitary hunter who accidentally surprised them at their task, and such like terrible tales. " When I was alone, an almost womanly fear seized upon me involuntarily, and I would then look timidly, expecting to see behind each projecting rock or overthrown tree, the cocked rifle of one of the black-eyed villains. Now it is quite different — there are two of us and two of them ; if we find the place where they are digging, and they discover us and prove hostile, well ! our rifles will shoot as surely, or perhaps more so,

than theirs ; if they listen to reason, all the better ; I don't wish to spill blood, and there will be silver enough for all four of us ; but I must know the place, and I shall not have wasted years in following them without gaining my end." Preston ceased, and brooding over his scheme, looked thoughtfully into the glimmering ashes, while Thompson also maintained silence for a few minutes, and dug all sorts of figures in the ground with his broad hunting-knife. At length he half turned his head to his comrade, and asked, as he wiped the point of his knife on his leather leggings and picked his teeth — " When shall we start ?" " As soon as the moon rises, and that will be at a quarter past twelve," was the reply ; " then we must follow the course of the stream till we reach the osier bed, and wait there until the Spaniards stream till we reach the osier bed, and wait there until the Spaniards return to their animals laden with the precious metal. They will have to make several journeys, and it will depend on our cleverness to settle the whole affair peaceably — that is, undiscovered — or, in a hostile manner, if we are detected. They have no dogs with them, so we need not fear them ; and if we find the place, we are made men." " Good !" Thompson said, placing another piece of meat before him, an example which his more serious companion now followed. " Good ! I am with you. There's little trouble and danger, and a prospect of immense gain ; I cannot resist it. We will now refresh ourselves heartily, and sleep for half an hour, for who knows how much we shall require it ? When the moon rises we shall have fresh strength to endure all that crosses our path with fresh spirits." Silently the two men ended their meal, then piled up the fire, which burned brightly through the dry wood they heaped on it ; wrapped themselves in their blankets, and tried to recruit their bodies for the exertions that awaited them. The younger soon slept, and his deep, regular breathing proved how little he knew the danger he was going to

incur, or, if he knew it, how undauntedly he awaited it. The elder also wrapped himself in his blanket and seemed to slumber, with his head laid on a piece of decayed wood, but his eyes were open, and he looked up thoughtfully at the myriads of stars which trembled peacefully and cheerily in the dark sky. At length the sky grew bright above the eastern chain of mountains ; Preston then rose from his hard couch, stretched his limbs, aroused his comrade, and then walked to the river, which was only a few paces distant, to bathe his hands and face in it, and commence his dangerous task with clear eyes and senses. Thompson sprang up and followed his example ; both then rolled up their blankets and hung them over their shoulders, took up their rifles, strewed fresh powder in the pans, and were thus prepared for anything that might oppose them. " Had we not better go through the valley V Thompson now asked, as he saw that Preston was climbing up some precipitous masses of rocks to reach one of the terraces. " We shall have, in any case, as he saw that Preston was climbing up some precipitous masses of rocks to reach one of the terraces. " We shall have, in any case, a better road, and can get along more quickly ; for, deuce take it, it is a very unpleasant matter clambering in the night among sharp stones with torn moccasins ! my feet already burn like fire." " We must keep among the rocks for the same reason that the Spaniards select the roughest part — to avoid leaving any trail. If we remain unnoticed, we will retire gently and cautiously, and not excite the suspicion of the enemy, who, assuredly, even if they do not follow the road through the valley, will look and see whether they can discover any dangerous footsteps there." With active steps, and without uttering another word, the elder walked in front, and Thompson, clearly perceiving that his more experienced comrade was in the right, followed him, only now and then, when he stepped on a very sharp stone, assuaging his pain by a half suppressed curse. They had advanced

in this way for nearly an hour, the moon poured its silvery rays on the forest, when Preston stopped, and, pointing before him, whispered to his companion that this was the osier-bed, and he fancied he heard the sound of a bell. The fine, pure tones of a few small bells now distinctly reached the ear through the silence of night, and the men stopped to discuss their future movements. " Are they on the right or left bank of the river V Thompson gently asked his comrade, who was listening attentively to the sound of the bells, in order to discover how many animals they had with them on this occasion. " On the right," Preston whispered ; " at least, their foot-marks have always been on that side. But," he suddenly turned the conversation, " only listen ; how many bells can you hear ? They seem to me five or six." With great attention, they now both listened to the mixed sounds which reached them from the valley, till Thompson at last broke the silence, and gently muttered to himself that he certainly heard four different bells. " I fancy there are five," Preston replied, equally gently. " Well, hang it, let them be ten," Thompson said, angrily ; " we are here now, and it will make no difference about a couple of Spaniards, more or less ; we are standing on Uncle Sam's own ground, and if the strangers, in case they discover us, have hostile designs, they must blame themselves if we are liberal with our lead. But what have you got there V he said to his companion, who was stooping down and carefully examining the ground. " A foot-mark, as true as I am alive, and belonging to a booted foot !" Preston cried ; " they must have gone up here." " Pst !" Thompson whispered, seizing his arm and holding it firmly, " I hear steps." They both listened with fixed attention, and the sound of a man slowly walking towards them became more and more distinct. They laid themselves on the ground, behind some scattered masses of rock, and awaited the figure, which, wrapped in a long brown cloak, and the head covered with a broad-leaved black sombrero, slowly

scaled the terrace at whose edge the hunters lay, then halted, looked all around cautiously for about five minutes, and uttered a gentle though distinct cry, in imitation of an owl. It was answered once from the thicket, and after this all was silent as the grave for half-an-hour ; then the same cry sounded again from the valley. The sentinel — for the tall, dark figure that leaned against a tree and listened for the slightest noise could be nothing else — answered as on the previous occasion, then walked down the path by which he had come, and in a few minutes, when his steps had died away in the distance, the whole neighborhood was as quiet and deserted as if it had never been desecrated by a human foot. The two men remained in their hiding-place for a quarter of an hour, but then, as all appeared safe, and they might believe that the strangers had again retired, Thompson raised his head, looked for a moment down into the valley that was brilliantly illumined by the moon, and then turned to his elder companion, who had also risen, and again inspected the lock of his rifle, to see whether the powder had not fallen from the pan through laying it down. " Well, Preston, what do you think of that apparition ? It did not please me at all ; I had a great desire to spring forward and stick my knife into the long fellow — it would have been one less !" " That would have been as foolish as it would have been dangerous," Preston replied in a half-suppressed tone, " and might not only have spoiled our whole scheme, but have exposed us to the vengeance of all the brown villains. No ! I now understand it all. The fellows must come down into the valley with their booty in the rocky bed of the mountain stream, else I should have found their traces in former years ; and this long fellow was merely stationed here to guard them against any surprise from below, while they, in the meanwhile, carried their booty to the camp, and load it there afterwards at their ease. But we have no time to lose now, for who knows if they make more than one journey 1 and, if

we don't find them engaged in digging, so that I can mark the spot, all our trouble will be of no avail." ' " But it is impossible that they can find all the best ore by night, and they must surely continue their labors after daybreak," Thompson replied. " What they acquired yesterday they will now secure, and then destroy all the traces which they may have left," Preston replied. " No, no ! we must not wait for daybreak ; and, besides, it seems to me that they scent danger, which the sentry sufficiently proves. So now come down into the valley ; we will creep through the osier-bed, where they have hardly left a guard, and will quietly follow the course of the stream. If we find them busied at the mine, we will mark the place and retire as quickly and gently as possible ; for I conjecture, not without reason, that they have come this time in larger numbers than usual. Let them take away what they have collected ; when they return next year they will find it more difficult to fill their leather saddle-bags than has yet been the case, with out the silver is found in lumps upon the mountain." The hunters now went cautiously down in the narrow valley, crawled like snakes into the little osier-bed, which was not very thick, — paying the closest attention, at the same time, to the slightest thing that might menace them with danger or discovery. But there was no watch left near the mules, which grazed quietly, and did not appear to pay any attention to the crawling visitors ; and, drawing a deep breath, the hunters again reached the open forest above the osier-bed, where Preston was about to hurry forward, when Thompson took him by the arm and asked whether they had not better first look for the silver which the Spaniards had already carried to some place near them. " Go to the deuce with your nonsense !" Preston replied, angrily. " What ! waste our time here with child's play, to find out a thing which we dare not even touch without fearing immediate discovery 1 Come, come, we may at any moment meet the villains on their return, and it would be

desirable for us to leave them before they have any idea of our vicinity." With these words, he loosed himself from Thompson's grasp, and glided with noiseless step over the smooth round pebbles in the bed of the river, accompanied by his comrade with equal precaution, like two dark shadows that had lately quit their graves. They had continued their progress for nearly a mile, undisturbed and uninterrupted, without hearing the slightest sound that could betray the vicinity of living creatures, when they suddenly heard voices close before them, and they had scarcely time to throw them selves in the shadow of a fallen plane tree, before five dark forms, with small sacks on their backs, which must have been of consider able weight, judging from the stooping position of the men, who came straight towards them, and walked noiselessly towards the osiers, stepping from one large stone to another. When they were only a few paces distant from the hunters' hiding-place, the leader stopped, and addressed a few words in Spanish to his followers ; but soon after he went on, and disappeared with his comrades behind a rock that formed a curve in the course of the Hurricane. " Did you understand what that long scoundrel muttered in his beard V Thompson asked of his companion. " Not a word," the latter replied. " It is the first time I ever heard Spanish spoken ; but come on quickly, we dare not lose a moment ; perhaps we can discover the mine before they return, for, hang it ! there are more of them than I expected, and the fellows wear long, sharp knives." Quickly and gently the two followed the course of the little stream for some thousand paces, when Preston, who was in front, suddenly stopped, and pointed to several picks and spades that lay scattered about in a dried-up part of the bed of the river. " There, by Heaven !" he cried, seizing Thompson's shoulder convulsively, " we're in the nest." "And what's that dark object lying under the bush ?" Thompson asked, as, with outstretched hand, he walked up to the place in question,

and stooped down to look at the object that had excited his attention. But, with a cry of terror and surprise, he sprang back, for at only the distance of a few inches the dark eyes of a man gleamed, who sprang to his feet at the same moment with a brandished knife, and uttered a loud cry for help. " Devil !" Preston shouted, who had also drawn his knife from his belt on the enemy's first movement, " Devil !" and rushed on the Spaniard. The leap would have been his destruction, however, had not accidentally the rifle which he held in his left hand warded off the foe-man's sure blow, and at the same moment the hunter's broad knife was driven home in his breast, and he fell to the ground with a loud yell ; but in his fall he tore a pistol from his belt, and fired it at his enemy. The bullet missed the man for whom it was intended, but it shattered the left hand of his comrade, who was standing close by him, and had just raised his arms to finish the enemy with a blow from the butt-end of his rifle. Thompson's arm sank powerless by his side, and his rifle rolled down among the stones. Still he flew like a tiger on the mortally wounded man, and drove his knife thrice into his breast, till Preston seized his arm and drew him back. " Away, away !" he cried ; " he has had enough, but we shall soon have the other devils on our track. Away ! I would not, for all the silver mines in the world, form the acquaintance of their knives."



## CHAPTER XV

### A TREASURE LOST.

I am wounded," Thompson whispered, with suppressed pain ; " my hand is smashed." " Better your hand than your head," Preston growled, raising the rifle from the ground and handing it to his crippled comrade." Come ; in five minutes it will be too late." And, with hurried steps, he hastened, followed by Thompson, who perceived their imminent peril, for a short distance along the bed of the stream, and then bounded up the rocky wall to the right, probably to reach the summit of the hill before the pursuers, and then carry on their flight successfully on the other side of the ridge, under the protection of night. With his shattered arm hidden in his bosom, Thompson remained close to Preston's side, and in a few moments they both disappeared in the shade of the forest. At the same instant, however, the bushes rustled, and five dark forms broke through the branches on to the battle-ground just deserted by the fugitives. They uttered one cry of terror when they saw the body of their murdered comrade, and cast inquiring glances around to discover the performers of the deed and sacrifice them to their vengeance ; but then a quick, authoritative movement from their leader warned them to silence, and, like so. many figures carved out of black marble, the men stood breathlessly and listened. For a few moments the silence of death prevailed, till the sound of a cracking branch reached their ear, when, unanimously, and with a loud shout of joy — like dogs that scent the proximity of their flying enemy, the panther — the five powerful men sprang up the almost perpendicular rocky wall that enclosed the narrow defile, and, with revenge and bloodthirstiness in their glances, followed the direction in which they had heard the noise. The two fugitives, who had brought the pursuers on their track by a fall on the part of the wounded man,

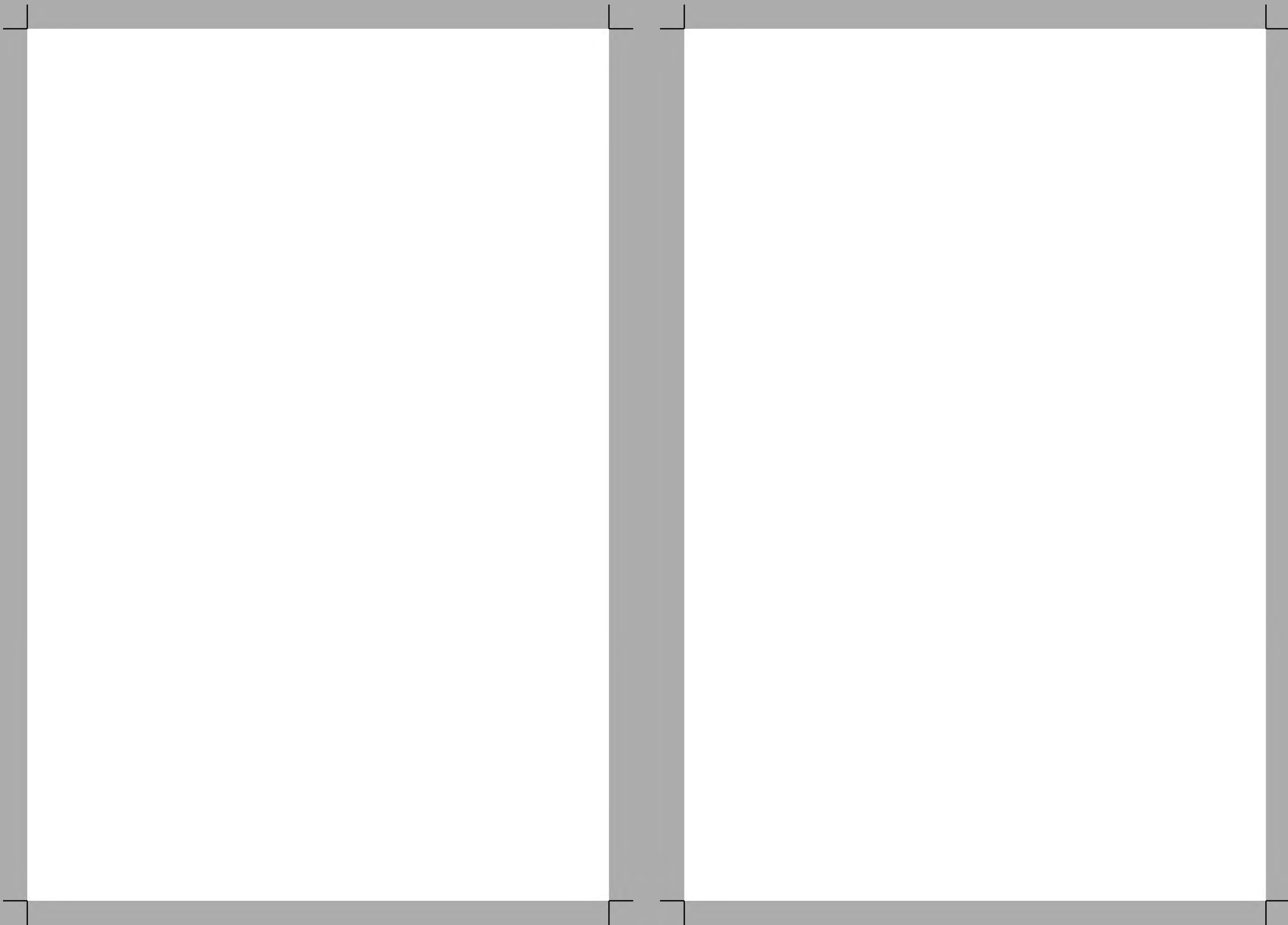
had already reached the sixth terrace, and were hurrying with rapid steps towards a thicket of chestnut trees, which lay darkly before them, when they heard the steps of the swiftest of their foe-men close behind them. At the right moment, Preston pulled his comrade into a small ravine, formed by a spring that burst there from the rock, and close to which, at not two paces distant, a dark abyss yawned, as a tall, dark figure sprang past them and hurried towards the thicket. He was followed rapidly by a second and a third, and the two last had already climbed the edge of the terrace, and were about following the same direction, when one of them, guided either by chance or by an instinct that betrayed the presence of a foe, sprang towards the dark spot that contained the two fugitives, and which probably appeared to him suspicious, and looked attentively in. The moon, at this moment, shone out from behind a fleecy cloud, and the glistening rifle-barrel must have betrayed the hidden men, for a " Ha !" of surprise escaped the Spaniard's lips. But it was his last sound, for Preston, when he saw that they were discovered, had calmly raised his rifle, and, on the crack of the piece, the Spaniard fell, with a heavy sound, among the rocks. " Kill the other villain quick, or hell escape !" he now cried to his comrade, who leaned against the rock, pale and breathless. " Take my gun ; I cannot raise it now," he whispered, and handed him the rifle, which Preston seized with feverish excitement, in order to render the other foe-man harmless. But the latter stepped behind a large oak, which covered him, and his shout soon brought the others back to the spot, who had been stopped in their career by the crack of the rifle, and now obeyed the summons with wild shouts of joy- But Preston had not been idle in the meanwhile, and, as he saw that the Spaniard was out of his reach, he laid down Thompson's rifle, reloaded his own, and was shaking powder into the pan, when the dark shadows of the pursuers became visible as they rapidly glided among the



masses of rock and trees. In a few words, the Spaniard that had remained behind described the hiding-place of their enemies, and showed them the new victim who had fallen by Preston's unerring hand ; but only a loud, wild shout of revenge — on hearing which the two pursued men involuntarily recoiled — was the reply, and, like tigers, the Spaniards rushed on their prey. Preston held his rifle in readiness, and the first, who rushed upon Mm from behind a rock, with a pistol in one hand and a knife in the other, fell, shot through the heart ; then, throwing down his rifle, he seized his comrade's, and aimed with lightning speed at the nearest man ; but his finger pulled the trigger in vain ! the sparks certainly flew down into the open pan, but the powder had been scattered on its fall, and the iron struck the flint to no purpose. The next moment, a flash burst from behind a closely adjacent rock, and Preston fell back upon his comrade with a shattered skull Thompson sprang forward with a drawn knife, and defended himself with wild desperation against the three assailants who rushed upon him, as if he despised wounds and danger ; but a blow from the butt of a pistol caused him to stagger, and, while he tried to clutch the rock with his wounded hand, he fell, with a heavy crash and a loud cry of agony, into the deep, yawning abyss at his side. Three days had elapsed when a hunter from the settlements on the Hurricane followed the track of a deer, and saw swarms of carrion crows hovering over one of the terraces. In his curiosity to see what species of game had fallen a prey to the ravenous birds, he drew near the spot, and found on the mountain one, and in the abyss a second, skeleton, but, at no great distance from the first, a newly-made grave, and upon it, as a tomb stone, a broad-leaved sombrero, fastened with a long knife upon the hurriedly thrown-up mound. Although he hurried as quickly as he could back to the settlements, and on the next morning brought all the neighbors he could collect to the scene of the contest, and thence followed the

easily- guessed criminals in order to punish them, they remained in vain for days, with the keen scent of Indians, on the track of the mules. The crafty Spaniards had shipped themselves and all that belonged to them in safety in canoes, and only sent one of their number, with the beasts of burden, by land, in order to lead those astray who, they were sure, would pursue them. The latter had then sold the mules, and had disappeared without leaving a trace. From that day, none of the Spaniards have dared again to scale the mountains, where the vengeance of the wild frontier men awaited them ; but the Silver Mine on the Hurricane has not yet been discovered by the dwellers upon that river, and in vain have the hunters tried to penetrate a mystery in the preservation of which so much blood was shed.

The End



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